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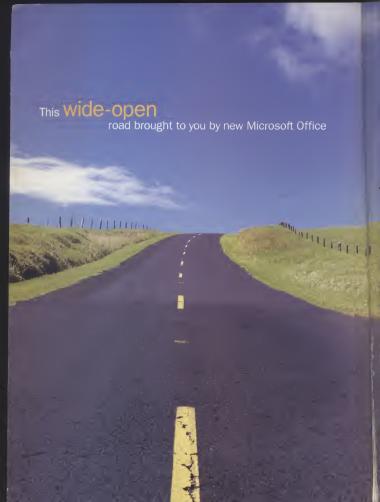
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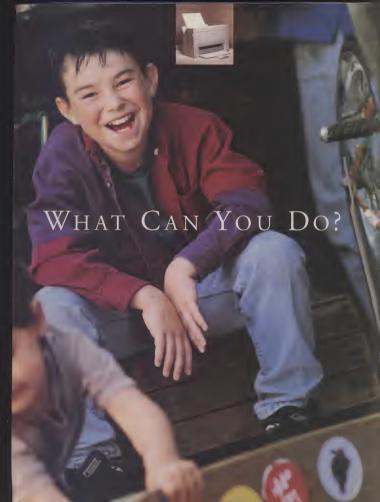




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PCMCIA Slots	2 Type II or 1 Type III	2 Type II or 1 Type III	2 Type II or 1 Type III	2 Type II or 1 Type III
16-Bit Audio	No	No	Yes	Yes
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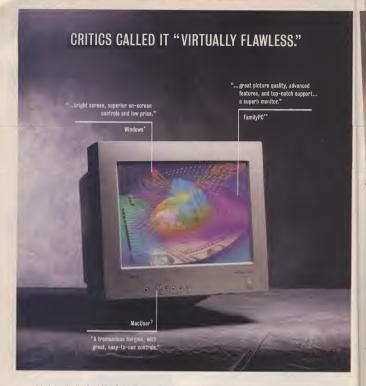
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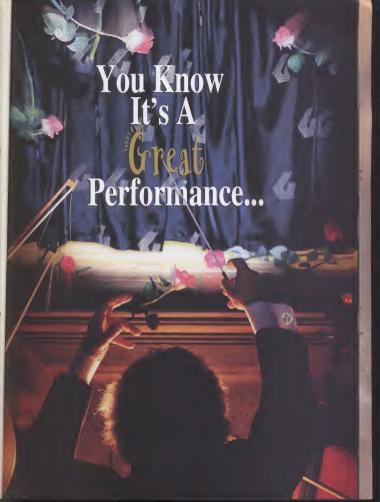
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Software Diva

And for the grand finale: The P5-166XL has the best software bundle found anywhere with Gateway's Ultimate Software Bundle! It includes MS Office 95, Professional Edition and Gateway's Generations II Software Collection for use with the Windows 95 operating system. It's all you'll ever need for business applications in the Windows 95 environment, and for the most complete, updated versions of the latest and greatest multimedia applications, most optimized for Windows 95. A gaming pad is included in the Ultimate Software Bundle for use with all your entertainment software. Call and ask how you can upgrade other Gateway 2000 systems to get the Ultimate Software Bundle.

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All Gateway systems come with our superb Gateway Gold⁷⁶ service program for unbeatable and award-winning support, including toll-free technical support for the life of your Gateway computer. The P5-166XL gives you even more with Gateway Gold Premium, adding an extended three-year on-site agreement** and a priority 800 number for access to technical experts. Call today and ask for details on our celebrated Gateway Gold programs!

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All Gateway professional Pentium® processor-based systems have EDO performance DRAM, and most come standard with pipelined burst cache. These features will give you a faster, mote coeffective means to great performance. And for extraordinary levels of performance, Gateway's P5-133 Professional system includes the ultra-fast 133MHz Pentium processor and is standard with 16MB EDO performance DRAM and 250K pipelined burst cache. Gateway utilizes EDO and pipelined burst cache memory technologies for the best performance—anywhere.

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The Right Equation

Gateway PCs include the Microsoft[®] Windows[®] 95 operating system, and our Professional models all tout MS Office 95, Professional Edition or MS Works 95, both compatible with 32-bit performance and backward compatibility for 16-bit applications. When you buy a system from Gateway, we'll also give you a choice of operating systems. Whether it's MS-DOS[®] and Windows for Workgroups, Windows NT, or Windows 95, Gateway 2000 will meet all your computing needs.

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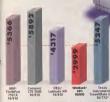
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PCC Online/Adam Meyerson

THIS JUST IN

he news never stops. One minute the market is setting new records. The next it's taking a dive. Blink and you might miss something big. Wars. Mergers. Elections. Weather disasters. Backwater Arkansas deals. Medical breakthroughs. If you haven't visited PC Computing Online recently, have we got news for you.

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Pour yourself a cup of java and browse online through the New York Times, San Jose Mercury News, Boston Globe, Dallas Morning News, Chiago Tribune, Times of London, Australian Observer, and China News Digest. And if you can't wait for the printed word, we'll take you live to the CNN Center, the BBC in London, or the Canadian Broadcasting Comparison, and lots more in Cornoration. And lots more in Cornoration.

Number, Please If you live and die by the phone, you're in for a bonus. PC Computing Online has added AT&CT's 800 directory, which gives you any 800 number in seconds. And we have a similar resource from the New York/New England Exchange (Nynex), with yellow pages of its own. We give you instant access to own. We give you instant access to more than 16 million phone numbers.

The real power is in Nynex's search engine. No more flipping through hundreds of pages or staring at the big book, praying for divine intervention. With the interactive yellow pages, you specify the category, city, state, zip code, or area code. The search engine even helps narrow your category. Meanwhile, why fume on the phone to track down a missing

package when you

can go right to UPS's

or Federal Express's

Web site? Both are easy enough for anybody to use, and the technology is so advanced that its real-time updates track progress from

Fly Me Last but not least, we added an experience that could virtually turn your world upside down. Or sideways. VRML (Virtual Reality Modeling Language) is an industry work-in-progress that delivers an animated, real-time, interactive adventure on the Web. Just download the viewer to see dozens of astonishing demos that let you walk through buildings, fly through landscapes, and explore the human body—from the inside.

door to door. We'll connect you.

We also have demos of Hot Java, Surfacesystems free programming language designed to make it easy to develop interactive Web applications. And we have plenty of Java applets that will supercharge your browser to do amazing things. Watch the demos and you'll be inspired to bring your home page into the next dimension—or hire a Java programmer to do if for you.

Don't waste a second. Get on the Web and into PC Computing Online (www.zdnet.com/-pccomp). We're news as well as our trademark maps, free stuff, product peeks, and more.

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BY PHONE, FAX, NET & POST: Great Guides · Games PCs Play · Net vs. Newsprint

GIVING READERS THE GO SIGN

Green Light for Buyers' Guide

our new Windows 95 Buyers' Guide (December 1995, page 221) is great! The traffic-light ratings really grabbed my attention. And as far as the Holiday Gift Guide (page 209) is concerned, you guys have to stop staying up late reading *Wired*. How about some close-ups and descriptions of the products? I have to admit I liked the groovy outfits on Babs and Trixie; any chance of autographs?

Jay Morris via the Internet

Net Insight

I'm really impressed with your December 1995 feature on the Internet ("The 1,001 Best Web Sites," page 121). I'm new to the Internet and the World Wide Web and found many of the sites you recommended very interesting and full of information—especially the ones dealing with science. Your suggestions of products and services have never let me down. And if I'm looking into buying a product, I always turn to your magazine first to see how it rates. I think your reviews and features are well thought out, to the point, and very fair. Keep up the good work!

JOSEPH C. ELLIOTT VIA COMPUSERVE

Fresh Web Site

I was disappointed that Mentos's FAQ page did not make your 1,001 best of the Web in the candy-site section. If you get chills every time you see one of those dreadful Mentos advertisements, you'll probably like this site. And the Mentos Art Gallery is not to be missed.

PAULA VOGEL VIA THE INTERNET

HOW COULD WE? Check it out at http://www.best.com/~dijon/tv/mentos/mentos-Faq.html. Any other sites we missed? Let us know. And let us know why, too.

Game Theories in 3-D

I read your December 1995 Pulse story on 3-D ("Welcome to the Third Level," page 64) with great interest. Will 3-D graphics revolutionize the industry? Marybe. Will PGs overtake game consoles? I hope not. Game consoles are more reliable and cheaper and gaming platforms. Ever heard of Donkey Kong Country? Or Killer Instinct? Both games sold millions. But neither is available on the PC, and they won't be. Leave the games to the consoles.

Scort Nicolason.

_

Good News for Paper

I disagree with your December "Radar" about newspapers (page 68). I've used the Internet to read a newspaper, and it takes a lot less time to turn a paper page than to wait 30 seconds or more for the correct Web page to lead. And speaking of things on the way out, I'd bet money that online services such as America Online and CompuServe will lose favor. I've sheaper to use an Internet provider. I use NetCom, and for \$20 a month 1 get 40 hours of time on the Net.

PAUL CHINNERY VIA THE INTERNET

Internet Cooperation

Many readers have written to your publication in the last few months complaining about the lack of local Internet access in rural areas. Here in Helena, Montana, 100 citizens who were concerned about not having a local-access provider formed a cooperative association (similar to rural agricultural cooperatives) to work on getting Internet access. Something to think about.

C. T. CANTERBURY

Cleveland Seeing Stars

Great "Free Stuff" in your December 1995 issue! (I-Way Patrol, page 365.) But in your ratings stale, you compare a two-star product to "a week in Cleveland." That's not fair. When was the last time you went to Cleveland? Have you ever listened to our orbests an Severance Hall? Or seen our art museum? And have you visited the Rock'n/Roll Hall of Fame? Or boarded a train in the most beautiful station in the world? We have entertainment galore, as well as diverse cultural offerings. Don't indee what you're never seen.

HANNE L. KIRKILAS

NO OFFENSE. We picked Cleveland because it strikes us as a non-vacation destination, not because it's a bad place to live. We could have picked Foster City, California (our magazine's headquarters), for the same reason.

Beyond the Web

The cover of your December 1995 issue touts the "Best 1,001 Internet Sites." Inside, the title changes to the "The 1,001 Best Web Sites" (page 121). Internet and Web are not interchangeable. In the last few years, the Internet has grown dramatically and has become far more than just Web sites and FTP sites for cool Windows software.

CHUCK SKINNER VIA THE INTERNET

ON THE CONTRARY, Web technology is exactly what has made the Internet grow so explosively in the last few years. It's no coincidence that



































It copies.

(It does not, unfortunately, monitor taste.)



Introducing the first color printer-copier. The HP CopyJet.

Look at the vivid color. Look at the flawless reproduction. Don't look at the hat. What's important is that the new CopyJet gives you the quality you'd expect from an HP color printer, and it has the full functionality of 495* a color copier. Besides the departmental convenience, the CopyJet is easy to operate and uses plain paper. If the whole department needs color printing and copying, there's the networkready HP CopyJet M[†], for \$3199. That's just a fraction of the money you won't have to spend for color copies. Which will make you look good, no matter what you're wearing.



Mail By PHONE, FAX, NET & POST: Picture (Almost) Perfect · Why AOL? · Poor OS Winner

when the Internet became graphical, it spawned more and better sites devoted to graphical operating systems like Windows.

Image Is Everything

John C. Dvorak's December 1995 column ("Cheese!" page 75) demonstrates an abysmal lack of understanding of photography as a medium. Eventually, electronic imaging will replace film, but not in our lifetime. The demise of film is decades away. Sharp resolution is just a pipe dream for digital cameras right now. As Kodak learned the hard way with its Disc camera, photography is more than taking snapshors. It's an art form.

J. J. STEWART

AOL for MVP?

What are you thinking? How can you rate America Online the best online service in your MVP Awards? ("The Most Valuable Products of the Year," December 1995, page 196.) This service is expensive, uses outdated hardware, and doesn't have a firewall in place. There isn't a local-access number for America Online in my area. I pay \$20 a month for a local provider and get point-to-point protocol, static Internet protocol, and no line-time charge.

NATHANIEL RADDIN VIA THE INTERNET

AMERICA ONLINE'S WINDOWING.

multitasking interface, and rich content are what make it a winner. For Web browsing only, you're better off with a local-access provider. But if you're looking for an all-purpose online service that's easy to use, America Online is an excellent choice. (For more details, see this month's "Online Superguide," page 115.)

A Costly Victory

In his December 1995 letter, Jeff Millard says that anyone who hasn't bought Windows 95 is a "loser" and he and Bill Gates are "winners" ("Win with Windows 95," Mail, page 56). I understand why Bill Gates is a winner, but what's that got to do with Millard? He lucked out on a decent operating system this time, after spending who knows how

much on IBM's OS/2 Warp (which he claims he's thrown in the trash) and Apple's Macintosh (which he says he uses as a paperweight).

IEEE WEIDAUER VIA COMPUSERVE

Thanks for Sharing

I have been a shareware-games developer for 12 years, and was shocked that a magazine like yours would publish outdated information as you did in your December Mail section ("Free, for a Fee," page 56). Shareware is not free; it must be registered if people want to use it. After a free trial period, if people want to continue using the shareware, they must pay for it. Users don't decide how much it's worth, nor do they make "donations." They pay what the author of the program charges.

VIA COMPUSERVE

YOU'RE RIGHT: If you decide to keep a shareware program, pay the fees. We regret the misunderstanding.

Taming the Internet

Good job, PC Computing! I loved your "Underground Internet" article in the November 1995 issue (page 195). I could not have received this issue at a better time. Your guide helped me take advantage of my new modem by letting me quickly access some good Web sites on the Internet. Thank you for helping me tame the Internet monster.

R. JASSO, JR.

For the Record

The correct rebate prices for Quicken's financial packages ("Quicken Taps into Online Banking," November 1995, page 84) are \$5 off Ouicken 5, making the purchase price \$35; and \$10 off Quicken Deluxe 5, making the purchase price \$50.

GOT A FAVORITE WEB SITE TO SHARE? Send your thoughts about this and other subjects to Mail, PC Computing, 950 Tower Lane, 19th Floor, Foster City, CA 94404; fax: (415) 578-7059; Internet: 72241.1724@compuserve.com; CompuServe: 72241,1724. Letters are subject to editing for length and clarity.

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The DC50 zoom camera is our newest point-and-shoot. It comes with thins level of image resolution, and a 3:1 zoom loss of CMCIA-ATA compatible card option of

You may wonder why Kodak offers so many digital cameras. We didn't start out this way. We started out with one. The first megapixel digital camera ever built, in 1986.

Since then, we've made cameras for NASA, for professional photographers, for medical professionals, desktop publishers, and business people. As one camera couldn't possibly meet the diverse needs of these people, we've created cameras that do. And our family has grown.

The DCS 465 digital camera back is compatible with medium format operas (FIASSELBLAD, MAMIYA) and 4 x 5 view cameras. It offers 6 million pixel resolution, and works with professional flash systems.





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digital image quality. of it, quantity too.)



output, that captures fine detail. A color

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course, Kodak's color expertise, responsible

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other single-shot digital camera, resulting in unsurpassed picture quality that you can only get from Kodak.

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Or visit us on the World Wide Web at http://www.kodak.com/

Together, this technology captures and protects images and color like no



It's how you put pictures to work." Circle 120 on reader service card.



Windows 95 Explodes: You thought a lot of conies of Windows 95 were sold last August? 1996 is expected to be Microsoft's banner year.



Point of Access: Of the estimated 37 million people who have Internet access, more than half are surfing from the comforts of home.



Who's Online: The Internet is still overrun by males, but the gap is closing in commercial online services, with women making up nearly half the subscribers.

FUTURE WATCH

PCC's **Crystal Ball**

Being at the helm of the computer industry, the editors of PC Computing have the inside word on everything. We've managed to get a glimpse of future technologies and products that could revolutionize the way we work. Just remember that you heard it here first Internet Everywhere It's

no secret that the Web is growing faster than the national debt, and 1996 will be a blowout year. More and more apps, languages. and viewers are being built into Web pages and browsers. Web incarnations like Macromedia's Shockwave for Director. Adobe's Acrobat, VRML, Sun Microsystems' Java, and Microsoft's BlackBird authoring tool will make those stagnant HTML pages obsolete by year's end. Start thinking ISDN modems, too, because in the next few months you'll see Web pages dressed up with animation, sound, and video. You'll also see Internet integration added to almost every app on the market. Products such as Peachtree Accounting, Lotus's



No Illusion: Expect big price drops, huge performance gains, flat displays, and the Internet everywhere in 1996

Notes, and Elan Software's GoldMine already have some form of integration.

Megahertz to Burn The 150MHz Pentium Pro was just announced, but it's already being brushed aside by 200MHz Pentium Pro systems. Dual-processor 200MHz Pentium Pros running on Windows NT will soon become the choice of power users.

Jointly developed by Motorola, IBM, and Apple, a new desktop machine that will run any Windows NT, OS/2. Macintosh, or Unix application will finally be available by the end of the year. Also keep an eye out for \$500 machines from the likes of Sony, IBM, and Sun Microsystems that will act chiefly as terminals into the Internet or your own server.

Gigabytes to Burn Costs are plummeting for traditional hard drives, while Ultra-SCSI 2GB drives from Seagate and Quantum are quickly coming to market. Removable-storage

UPDATES **Best Bets and Bargains**

PHONE POWER The \$119 Phone Blaster is a faxmodem, voice-mail system and sound card in one Contact Creative Labs at (800) 998-1000 Reader Service No. 601

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SUPERSTORAGE Get 8GB of fast network backup storage with the \$699 MiniFlex Contact Storage Dimensions at (408) 954-0710. Reader Service No. 602 SMART SEARCHING Find and index millions of Web pages

instantly, both online and offline, with the \$95 WebCompass. Contact Quarterdeck at (800) 683-6696. Reader Service No. 604

Web Appliances

devices are getting faster and cheaper. By 1997, 1GB drives will cost less than \$200. Look for tape backup to go the way of the eight-tack, Meanwhile, eight-speed and ten-speed CD-ROM drives are also on their way—with tiny price tags. However, we probably won't see many CDs that take full advantage of the speed for ouite some time.

The Other Windows Windows 96 should arrive by the end of the summer, but Windows NT—with its Windows 95-like interface—could steal the thunder. Windows 97-like interface—could steal the thunder. Windows 97-like interface (parts of Windows 95 are still 16-bit), excellent security, and 16-bit), excellent security, and 16-bit, excellent security, and 19-bit post ode make it ideal for mission-critical business applications. It's also the only operating system to harness dual-processor systems.

Seeing Is Believing
Conventional tube monitors
aren't going away, but you'll
soon have better options.
Fujitsu's 42-inch flar Plasmatron display is turning heads,
as are 21-inch models from
Sony and Mitsubishi. New
flat-panel, high-resolution
LCDs from NEC Technologies—the same displays that a
year ago cost a staggering
\$14,000—are dropping below
the \$4,000 mark.

Intelligent Tools What about software Bill Gates's vision includes applications with smart features that will customize and automate tasks. OLE and Apple's OpenDoc will be better integrated into applications, letting you use various apps simultaneously on one document. Did we mention Internet integration? Don't be surprised if you can surf the Web with Minesweeper. Jl.

A Chip off the New Block

The days of separate peripheral cards for sound, graphics, and modems are numbered. Chromatic Research has developed the Mpact, a programmable multimedia processor that handles videoconferencing, communications, 3-D, video, and sound on a single chip. Nor is Intel asleep at the wheel: A Pentium code-named MMX (MultiMedia Extensions) is due out by year's end. Rs

Mpact / Chromatic Research / (415) 254-1600 / Prices vary by system vendor / Reader Service No. 610

CD-ROM Notebooks

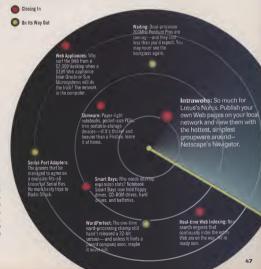
Pentiums and CD-ROM drives used to come in only high-end desktops. Here are the least expensive Pentium notebooks with CD-ROM drives we could find as of November 21, 1995.

Product	Price
TI Extensa 550CD	\$2,865
Computer Discount Wareho (800) 886-4239	wse
Twinhead Slimnote 875CX Twinhead Corp. (800) 993-8946	\$2,999
Toshiba Satellite 400CS Bulldog Computer	\$3,198
(800) 438-6039 TI Extensa 550CDT NECX Direct	\$3,329
(800) 961-9209 NEC'Versa 4000D	\$3,639
PCs Compleat (800) 598-4727	

Reader Service Numbers: Computer Discount Warehouse, 605; Twinhead Corp., 606; Bulldog Computer, 607; NECX Direct, 608; PCs Compleat, 609

RADAR: Notes Killers, Pentium Power Times Two

What's on the scope? If a blip is near or moving toward the middle of the radar screen, check it out. If it's moving off the screen, steer clear for now.



Instant Internet Calling Card

If you're calling overseas, why pay an international charge when TCP/IP does the trick for free? Jabra-Net combines a headset, VocalTee's Internet Phone, and AlgoRhythm's PC Phone—all for \$99.

Provided you have a full-duplex sound card and a fast modem, Jabra-Net turns your desktop PC into a hands-free telephone. With VocalTee's Internet Phone, you can place calls over the Internet. Algo-Rhythm's PC Phone, a TAPI-compliant, Windows-based telephony package, lets you place and manage phone calls from your desktop.

The best part of the bundle is the labra Ear Phone hardware, which comes with an extra package of ear molds. And because Ear Phone can hook into any standard sound card or headest port, you can take it with you to listen to music, play games, or watch in-flight movies (although in coach class, you'll probably have to pay the headest free anywave).

Buy Jabra-Net for the Ear Phone, and consider the software—Internet Phone and PC Phone—a nice bonus. With this package, a sound card, and an Internet connection, you can make free phone calls to anyone with a similar setup. RS

Jabra-Net / Jabra Corp. / (800) 327-2230 / \$99 est. street price / Reader Service No. 612

Must-See Web TV

What's on the Web tonight, honey? @Home, a new joint venture from cable giant Tele-Communications Inc. and media mogul Will Hearst, might have the answer. @Home is a cable-based service that offers I-Way access at more than 500 times the speed of V.34 analog modems. It uses a customized version of Netscape's Navicator to bring TV-quality video to your desktop.

Sound cool? Well, don't trash your modem quite yet. @Home is merely in the testing stage, cable-modem prices have yet to be set, and Web pages will have to be redesigned to take full advantage of @Home\$ features. is

@Home / TCl and Kleiner, Perkins, Caulfield & Buyers / (415) 833-4950 / Price not available at press time / Reader Service No. 611



MACROMEDIA SHOCKWAVE FOR DIRECTOR

Shocking Web Effects

The World Wide Web is changing face once again. Along with recent Web developments like Borland's Latte (a Java development kit) and Adobe's Acrobat viewer for the Web (codenamed Amber), Macromedia's Shockwave for Director provides an easier way to build multimedia into Web pages: It takes files created in Macromedia's multimedia development software, Director, and optimizes them for the Web. To view pages made in Shockwave. Macromedia is offering a free plug-in for Netscape's Navigator 2.0. Using the viewer, you can experience interactive graphics, sound, and animation

Service of the servic



Eye-Popping: Shockwave for Director delivers multimedia-laden Web pages like this one. right from your Web browser. The good news for developers is that all content is created with Macromedia's Director. The bad news for the rest of us is that Director is the hallmark program for creating multimedia CD-ROMs. In theory, developers could take the content they've created for a CD-ROM and 3a) it onto the Web, leaving surfers with choking moderns.

Macromedia's free Shockwave developer kit optimizes Director movies for the Web by compressing them to 60 percent of their original size. And with every developers' kit, Macromedia includes tips and tricks on how to get Director files to their absolute smallest before they're compressed. Plus, the Shockwave viewer has been optimized for caching and streaming Shockwave files, and includes some security features.

Once you get past the bandwidth issue, you'll find that Shockwave-enhanced pages are amazing. Animation elements, buttons that churn out sound effects when you click on them, and simple interactive games are only some of the things already available. From a development standpoint, Director is easier to learn and work with than any Java-based product we've seen. And some big names, including Netscape, MTV, and USA Today, are already using Shockwave to develop Web pages.

web pages.

Expect a rocky start as multimedia-minded developers compress files originally made for CD-ROM and hope they work well on the Web. But with 250,000 registered users of Director, and a developers' kit that's free (so far), except to see some knockout pages soon. You can download the free Shockwave plugin for Netseapes' Navigator 2.0 and find links to early Shockwave-ahnaced pages at Macromedia's Web site (http://www.macromedia.com/l. H.

Shockwave for Director / Macromedia / (800) 326-2128 / Free / Reader Service No. 613

Contributors to Pulse: KYLA K. CARLSON, JAMES OLIVER CURY, MIKE HOGAN, SCOTT NAYLOR, RICH SCHWERIN. Edited by JACK LYON.

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Works overtime. Very dependable. Backed by a 3-year warranty*, you can rely on the 17" Magnavox CM4018 (16.22" viewable image size) color monitor around the clock for everything from video conferences to business reports.

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de pork bellies and futures in my boxers.

With my new Acer® Aspire® Desktop, I can take on Wall Street Aspire, To Do More.

from home. Aspire has Windows 95, an Intel Pentium processor

and 16MB of memory', so I can explore complex "what if"

trading scenarios. With its voice-activation capability, I can

get into my financial programs without typing.

ng.

The 28.8kbps fax modem[†] and speakerphone
A few more things

help me cut deals over the phone or online.

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speakers and accelerated graphics are terrific for multimedia.

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Acer Computer Explorer, helps me navigate with ease. With

Aspire, it's easy to keep control of my finances and my life.





Page 4 - Market E

For the location of the Acer Aspire dealer nearest you, call 1-800-529-ACER. Or visit us on the World Wide Web at http://www.acer.com/aac/



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The A-List Editors' Top Picks by Wendy Taylor

		Top Pick	The Buzz	The Stats*	More Info
1	High- Performance Pentium	Micron Electronics P133 Millennia	Want to see Windows scream? Want to see it again?	\$3,148, 133MHz Pentium, 16M8 RAM, 1.6GB, 6X CD-ROM.	Sept. 1995, page 106 (800) 515-9197 Reader Service No. 618
	High- Performance Pentium Pro	Hewlett-Packard Vectra XU 6/150	RISC power in an x86-based system. Feed it native 32-bit apps only.	\$5,700, 150MHz Pentium Pro, 32MB RAM, 2G8 hard drive.	Jan. 1996, page 86 (800) 752-0900 Reader Service No. 619
	Desktop Workhorse	Micron Electronics P120 Millennia	A trim minitower design and enough power to keep even wireheads happy.	\$2,699, 120MHz Pentium, 16M8 RAM, 1.2GB hard drive.	Sept 1995, page 106 (800) 515-9197 Reader Service No. 620
Systems	Low-Cost Desktop PC	Dell Dimension P75t	First-rate features at a cut-rate price—our favorite combination.	\$2,029, 75MHz Pentium, 16MB RAM, 1GB, 4X CD-ROM.	Stay tuned (800) 433-6675 Reader Service No. 621
	SOHO System	Compaq Presario CDS 982	Command central for any home office— manages your fax, voice, and e-mail messages while you get down to work.	\$2,199, 90MHz Pentium, 16MB RAM, 729MB hard drive.	Nov 1995, page 503 (800) 888-5816 Reader Service No. 622
	High- Performance Workstation	IBM Power Series 850	Workstation might meets Pentium prices in this PowerPC rocket.	\$6,796, 133MHz PowerPC 604, 32M8 RAM, 1GB hard drive.	Nov. 1995, page 71 (800) 426-7255 Reader Service No. 623
	Pricewise Direct System	Polywell Poly 500P8	The most PC for your money— we checked.	\$2,848, 133MHz Pentium, 16M8 RAM, 4X CD-ROM drive.	Jan. 1996, page 132 (800) 999-1278 Reader Service No. 624
ĺ	To You was a second	Compaq ProSignia 300 5/90	Who needs an information systems department? This server is so well designed, it runs itself.	\$5,434, 90MHz Pentium, 32MB RAM, 2GB hard drive.	Nov. 1995, page 138 (800) 345-1518 Reader Service No. 625
		Digital Prioris LX 590	Our labs call it the fastest server to hit our test bench; we call it a great deal.	\$4,418, 90MHz Pentium, 192MB RAM 4X CD-ROM drive.	Oec. 1995, page 158 , (800) 344-4825 Reader Service No. 626
		Compaq ProLiant 1500	A reliable anchor for 15 or more network nodes.	\$16,212, 100MHz Pentium, 128MB RAM two 2.1GB SCSI-2 drives	
		Hewlett-Packard NetServer 5/100 LH	Room for two processors and loaded with technical wizardry.	\$14,758, 100MHz Pentium, 192MB RAM four 1GB SCSI drives.	Nov. 1995, page 140 , (800) 322-4772 Reader Service No. 628
1	Portable Desktop Replacement	Toshiba Satellite Pro 410CDT	Big desktop power-but take only what you need on the road.	\$4,699, 90MHz Pentium, 8MB RAM, 4X CD-ROM drive.	Jan. 1996, page 94 (800) 999-4273 Reader Service No. 629
	Lightweight Traveling Notebook	IBM ThinkPad 701C	George Jetson would be envious; the butterfly keyboard spreads its wings when you open the case.	\$2,299, 50MHz 486DX2, 8M8 RAM, 540MB hard drive.	Dec 1995, page 158 (800) 426-7255 Reader Service No. 630
Portables	Low-Cost Color Portable	Texas Instruments Extensa Model 450	All the extras of Dell's Latitude and Toshiba's Satellite for hundreds less. Let the price wars begin!	\$1,799, 75MHz 486DX4, 4M8 RAM, 340MB hard drive.	Oec. 1995, page 92 (800) 848-3927 Reader Service No. 631
	Multimedia Notebook	Gateway 2000 Solo S90	Big, high-resolution screen; removable CD-ROM drive; and wired for sound.	\$4,799, 90MHz Pentium, 16MB RAM, 1.2G8 hard drive.	Nov. 1995, page 74 (800) 424-0854 Reader Service No. 632
	State-of-the-art Portable	IBM ThinkPad 760CD	When you demand the ultimate, you get full-screen hardware MPEG and a high-resolution 12.1-inch display.	\$7,449, 120MHz Pentium, removable CD-ROM drive.	Nov. 1995, page 66 (800) 426-7255 Reader Service No. 633
4		*ESTIMATED STREET PRICE	mgn-resolution 12.1-men tispiny.	J OD-ITOM GITTO.	11030 OUTNO 110, 033

The A-List Continued on page 56

		Top Pick	The Buzz	ı	The Stats*	More Info
ľ	Desktop Laser Printer	Hewlett-Packard LaserJet 5MP	You can buy a faster laser, but not a better one. Plus, who needs cables? Beam jobs to the IR port instead.	/	\$800, 6 ppm, 600 dpi, PCL 5 (PostScript optional), infrared port.	(800) 752-0900
Printers	Low-Cost Color Printer	Canon BJC-4100	Low-maintenance, high-quality color- and priced for mortals.	1	\$369, 720-by-360- dpi black, 360-by-360- dpi color.	This issue, page 140 (800) 848-4123 Reader Service No. 635
Desktop	Desktop Color Printer	Hewlett-Packard DeskJet 855C	Near-laser-quality color output for a tenth of the price.	1	\$499, 600 dpi, 7 ppm black, 3 ppm color.	This issue, page 140 (800) 752-0900 Reader Service No. 636
	Portable Printer	Citizen PN60	Slip it in your briefcase, then wow clients when you produce color pages on the spot.		\$339, 300-dpi thermal transfer, 1.5 pounds.	Feb. 1995, page 64 (310) 453-0614 Reader Service No. 637
ters		Hewlett-Packard LaserJet 5Si MX	Even 50-page print jobs fly out faster than you can trot down the hall to claim them.	/	\$3,499, 24 ppm, 600 dpi, PCL 5e, PostScript Level 2.	Jan. 1996, page 89 (800) 752-0900 Reader Service No. 638
work Prin		Tektronix Phaser 340	Drop-dead, solid-ink color at just 11 cents per page.	-	\$4,995, 4 ppm, 600-by-300-dpi black and color.	Oec. 1995, page 158 (800) 835-6100, ext. 125 Reader Service No. 639
Nex		Hewlett-Packard DeskJet 1600C	Churns out brilliant color pages faster than you can produce them.	1	\$1,400, 9 ppm black, 4 ppm color.	Stay tuned (800) 752-0900 Reader Service No. 640
1	High-Resolution 20- or 21-Inch Monitor	Nanao FlexScan T2-20	It's like buying orchestra seats for Windows—and worth every penny.	1	\$2,163, 20-inch, 1,600 by 1,200 pixels, Plug and Play.	Dec. 1995, page 158 (800) 800-5202 Reader Service No. 641
Video	High-Resolution 17-Inch Monitor	Sony Multiscan 17sf	Sweet 17-inch deal. Looks great, too.	1	\$850, 1,280 by 1,024 pixels at 60Hz.	0ec. 1995, page 158 (800) 352-7669, ext. 119 Reader Service No. 642
	High-Resolution Graphics Accelerator	Matrox MGA Millennium	Ultrafast Windows RAM and 3-D acceleration make this the graphics accelerator to covet.	/	\$480, 4MB WRAM, 1,280 by 1,024 pixels at 76Hz, PCI interface.	Oec. 1995, page 158 (800) 583-4353 Reader Service No. 643
1	Rimovable Storage	Iomega Zip Drive	Chic, purple, and portable. And the cartridges are removable.	1	\$199, 25MB or 100MB cartridges, SCSI or parallel interface.	This issue, page 175 (800) 697-8833 Reader Service No. 644
age	CD-ROM Drive	NEC MultiSpin 4Xc	The best bargain around: Queue up seven discs in this quad-speed jukebox for the price of a single-disc drive.	1	\$349, SCSI interface, seven-disc changer.	0ec. 1995, page 158 (800) 632-4636 Reader Service No. 645
Stor	Hard Drive	Seagate Medalist 2140	Be greedy. At these prices, why not get two?	1	\$530, Fast ATA-2, 10.5ms access time, 2.51GB storage.	Stay tuned (408) 438-8111 Reader Service No. 646
	Network Storage	Mega Drive Systems MR5 RAID Disk Array	The best kind of insurance for your network data.	1	\$12,745, 5GB RAID array.	Nov. 1995, page 186 (800) 404-6342 Reader Service No. 647
8	Personal Scanner	Visioneer PaperPort Vx	The quickest way to tame your paper in-box—moves paper off your desk and onto your hard drive.	1	\$359, 400-dpi scanner, document- management software.	Jan. 1996, page 92 (800) 787-7007, ext. 102 Reader Service No. 648
Peripherals	Multimedia Sound Card	Creative Labs Sound Blaster AWE32 PnP	The ultimate for business multimedia. Great for games, too.	1	\$249, 32-voice polyphony, 16-bit DSP.	Jan. 1996, page 173 (800) 998-5227 Reader Service No. 649
ā	High-speed Fax Modem	U.S. Robotics Courier I-Modem *ESTIMATED STREET PRICE.	The best of both worlds—a 28.8Kbps analog and ISDN modern in one.	1	\$895, ISDN and V.34 (28.8Kbps).	This issue, page 78 (800) 877-2677 Reader Service No. 650

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- PC MAGAZINE March 14,1995 "it's performance out distances even
- much more expensive modems."

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PC WEEK April 3, 1995

- "provided the most efficient built-in
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BYTE/NSTL LAB REPORT June 1995

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The A-List Continued from page 54

		Top Pick	The Buzz	The Stats*	More Info
0	Software Suite	Microsoft Office for Windows 95	The complete business-software suite for Windows 95.	\$499 (Standard Edition), 2BMB to B9MB hard disk space.	Sept. 1995, page 83 (800) 426-9400 Reader Service No. 651
phications	Word Processor	Lotus Word Pro 96	Microsoft's Word comes close, but smart spell-checking and versioning control give Word Pro 96 an edge.	\$75, Windows 95 or Windows NT 3.51, 8MB RAM.	Oec. 1995, page 158 (800) 343-5414 Reader Service No. 652
resulup r		Microsoft Excel for Windows 95	While Quattro Pro and Lotus 1-2-3 languish in the 16-bit world, Excel steals the 32-bit show.	\$339, Windows 95 or Windows NT 3.51, 8MB RAM.	Dec. 1995, page 158 (800) 426-9400 Reader Service No. 653
	Database	Microsoft Access for Windows 95	The database usability and productivity champ—for novices and experts alike.	\$339, 486 CPU, 12MB RAM.	Jan. 1996, page 162 (800) 426-9400 Reader Service No. 654
	-1	Lotus Freelance Graphics for Windows 95	Reason enough to upgrade to Windows 95. Great for flashy multimedia presentations.	\$329 (\$99 upgrade), Windows 95, 1BMB to 40MB hard disk space.	Sept. 1995, page 94 (800) 343-5414 Reader Service No. 655
		Microsoft Publisher for Windows 95	The ultimate vanity press: Create terrific-looking pages without even trying.	\$B0, 3B6 CPU, 6MB RAM, 6MB hard disk space.	Dec. 1995, page 158 (800) 426-9400 Reader Service No. 656
		QuarkXPress 3.31 for Windows	Produces pages as slick as the ones in your hands. PageMaker shops should check out PageMaker for Windows 95.	\$550, 486 CPU, 8MB RAM, 12MB to 15MB hard disk space.	Oec. 1995, page 158 (800) 788-7835 Reader Service No. 657
		CorelDraw 6	The all-in-one graphics toolkit for Windows 95: Draw, edit, and design your own masterpieces.	\$439, Windows 95, 486 CPU, BMB RAM.	Oec. 1995, page 158 (613) 728-0826, ext. 3 Reader Service No. 658
		Adobe Photoshop 3.0 for Windows	A digital darkroom for your PC. A Windows 95 version is just around the corner.	\$500, 486 CPU, 8MB RAM, 20MB hard disk space.	Nov. 1994, page 106 (800) 521-1976 Reader Service No. 659
THE REAL PROPERTY.	Personal Finance	Intuit Quicken Deluxe 5 for Windows	Never visit a bank again—this is branch-office checking from your hard drive.	\$60, 3B6 CPU, 4MB RAM, 7MB hard disk space.	This issue, page 159 (800) 624-8742 Reader Service No. 660
	Business Accounting	Intuit QuickBooks Pro 4.0	Cheaper than your average accountant, and a lot easier to understand.	\$189, 486 CPU, 4MB RAM, 12MB hard disk space.	This issue, page 92 (800) 624-8742 Reader Service No. 661
	Fax- Common at ons Software	Delrina CommSuite 95	One launchpad for all your internet fixes. Sends e-mail and faxes, too.	\$99, 486 CPU, BMB RAM, 30MB hard disk space.	Nov. 1995, page 83 (800) 721-9156 Reader Service No. 662
	Web Browser	Netscape Navigator 2.0	Still the best way to explore the Web. Download the new Windows 95 version from ftp://ftp.netscape.com.	\$49, Windows 95, 4MB RAM, Internet access.	Jan. 1996, page 108 (800) 638-7483 Reader Service No. 663
	Personal Information Manager	Lotus Organizer 2.0	The interface is a little precious— but the networking and usability extras are first-rate.	\$99, Windows 3.1, 386 CPU, BMB hard disk space.	Feb. 1995, page 118 (800) 343-5414 Reader Service No. 664
-	Project Manager	Microsoft Project for Windows 95	Takes the work out of teamwork—the easy way.	\$469, Windows 95, 386 CPU, 20MB hard disk space.	Oec. 1995, page 158 (800) 426-9400 Reader Service No. 665
	System Utility	Symantec Norton Utilities for Windows 95	Resuscitates dead files and diagnoses hardware problems before they happen. Everyone should have a copy.	\$90, Windows 95, 486 CPU, 8MB RAM.	Oec. 1995, page 158 (800) 441-7234 Reader Service No. 666
	Reference	Vicarious Our Times *ESTIMATED STREET PRICE	The best crash course in 20th-century history we've ever taken. Don't miss it.	\$70, Windows 3.1, 386 CPU, 4MB RAM, CD-ROM.	This issue, page 301 (800) 465-6543 Reader Service No. 667

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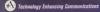
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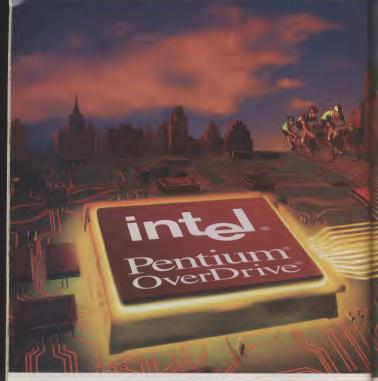
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TRUE LIES



o figure. Some people just can't deal with success. They spend huge amounts of time demonizing today's two leading computer forces—Microsoft and the Web. They blather on endlessly, fouling America's airwaves and front pages with alarmist know-nothing glop. Half these guys are smoking their own company dope. The other half are just plain ignorant. Enough already. Here are their top ten lies:

WITH THE INTERNET, WE WON'T NEED OPERATING SYSTEMS ANYMORE. Sheesh. We'll still have local apps and hardware, and we will need something reasonably fast to manage it all. For the foreseeable future, Windows will continue juggling our files and handling the bizarre array of misbehaving peripherals out there.

And the corollary: MICROSOFT IS HEADED FOR BIG TROUBLE. Wrong again. All of corporate America would like to be in such trouble. These are just jealous competitors whistling past their own graveyards.

MICROSOFT WINS ONLY BECAUSE IT'S A MAR-KETING BULLY. Sure, its clout gives it a leg up. But its main products are uniformly terrific.

NETSCAPE HAS THE INTERNET MARKET SEWN UP.
Remember, this company got to its giddy position by tweaking shareware and letting everybody download it free. If some other respectable company puts a smarter, slicker, compatible browser up on the Web for everyone to download, it's a whole new ball game.

SYSTEMS VENDORS ARE DOOMED BY \$500 DISK-LESS INTERNET WORKSTATIONS. Wishful thinking by MIS control freaks and vendors who arrived too late in the market.

THE FEDS ARE PROTECTING INNOCENT CHILDREN BY BANNING CYBERPORN. A ruse by prudes to

prevent you from seeing things they don't like. The first two Ws in WWW stand for World. Wide. The guys with the pinup pies will just go offshore or find electronic ways to remain anonymous. Parents, take responsibility.

THE WEB IS ELITIST—IT'S ONLY FOR THE HAVES.
THE HAVE-NOTS WILL SUFFER. The Internet works
fine on a 386 with a \$30 14.4 Kbps modem and
Windows 3.1. Schools and homes should be
able to pick up these cast-off systems for next to
nothing. And considering the benefits, a few
bucks a month for online time isn't outrageous.

YOU MEED AN EXPENSIVE SPECIALIST TO CREATE A DECENT WEB SITE. It's a snap to "borrow" the HTML code from sites you like (in Netscape's Navigator just select View by Document Source) and adapt it for own your needs. Thousands of terrific sites have been created by normal nonprogrammers. And push-button-easy authoring software is on the horizon.

with today's primitive brute-force search engines, which often can't locate what you need and instead drown you in a sea of useless hits.

THE INTERNET WILL WIPE OUT ALL PRINT MEDIA. Print is cheap, dense, portable, and rich—and it doesn't need wires or batteries. It'll be popular and powerful for decades. You're proof.









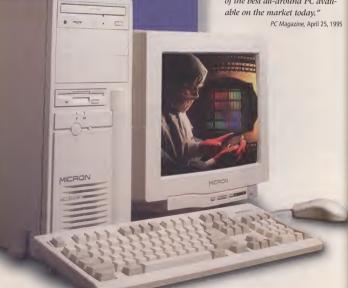


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- 15" Micron 15FGx, 1280NI, .28mm monitor Microsoft Works 95 CD

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 - Business lease \$100/month
- C 32MB EDO RAM 1.6GB EIDE hard drive 17" Micron 17FGx, 1280NL, 26mm monitor
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- · Microsoft Mouse, 104-key keyboard
- Microsoft Windows 95 CD Microsoft Office Pro 95 & Bookshelf 95 CDs
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ALIEN NATION



"Get Bill Gates" mood has permeated every newproduct release at the big computer shows recently. I didn't think much of this until two bug-eyed aliens arrived at my home last month and abducted me in their spaceship. I must have been knocked unconscious, because when I came to, I was seated at a big oval table with ten

within an orbiting saucer.

I quickly learned that there are two alien species visiting Earth. We're familiar with the short, bug-eyed aliens who relish strawberry ice cream. But there is a taller, more human-looking group that is also involved in abductions and general merchandising. An evil-looking alien gave me a menac-

ing stare. "What do you know about the New Unification Movement?" he asked.

"It's a church run by some Korean." He slapped me hard. "We have ways of making you talk!

Another alien stood up. "Blop, are you sure you have the right guy?"

"Perhaps," said the first alien. "Let the

ing for a 30-minute multimedia 3-D presentation the likes of which I've never seen. It explained how two alien cultures-the NTs and the Oracle Sonshave been studying Earth for the last 100 years. They stayed out of each other's way until recently, when the NTs decided to do a little contact work, as they call it. They chose a candidate in high technology and decided to control the future of human development through software marketing.

"We picked Mr. Bill Gates and decided to make him the richest, most powerful man in the world."

"Why him?" I asked. "Because he was the most unlikely can-

didate. We thought it would be funny." "That explains it," I said to myself. The presentation continued, showing

how the aliens had a long-term plan to

aliens. We were in a large conference room convert the world to a single unified computer platform. "Just as one culture unites in subconscious ways because everyone speaks the same language, we can get the whole world on one wavelength if everyone uses Windows!"

It was then that I noticed the alien logo was similar if not identical to the Microsoft Windows logo. An alien saw me staring at it. "That is the symbol of our planet," he said. "Look familiar?" They Alien ABDUCTIONS

and general

MERCHANDISING.

humans through

Motion CONTROL

to bend the will

of WEB SURFERS.

That explains it.

Manipulating

the WINDOWS

interface.

all laughed. "So what's the point of putting everyone on the

same platform?" "When people do something in common, they develop singular thought processes. We've designed the interface to make people respond to our suggestions. Windows users can easily be manipulated to our will."

"What? Are you going to take over the world?"

I was slapped hard for that comment. "None of your business. The point is that the people within the New Unification Movement are being manipulated by our so-called friends, the Oracle Sons, They are

doing with the Internet lackeys what we've been doing with Microsoft. They have already created their billionaire and expect to topple our plans. Fools! So tell me what you know about Netscape."

"Netscape makes an Internet browser. The one most people seem to use. So?"

The aliens chatted among themselves. The one who seemed to be the most important nodded his head at someone in the back. The mean alien looked at me and spoke. "Netscape means escape from NT. It's a coded word. Pay attention to these things. Look, we're going to show you something, and it's up to you to warn the public." The projector lit up a demonstration of Netscape's Navigator.

Voice-over: "The human body is coded with a matrix of neurons, which can be bypassed with mechanical overrides that are sometimes needed to control the population. This is done with motion control. Navigator's menus make the motions occur during a process called 'surfing the Web.' Note the movement is parallel to the human open-lock methodology, which we use to unseal the suggestibility

of the brain-also known as the secret 44th movement in tai chi chuan. Thus we can implant command and control. We believe that this is no coincidence and that the Oracle Sons' nation actually designed the product with this in mind. Compare it with the original Mosaic and see that the only changes are the ones that cause the human interlock to open by mechanics. Furthermore, the blinking Netscape icon was paced to hypnotize the user for deeper suggestibility."

I was aghast. "This is incredible. What's the point of all this? Deeper suggestibility to what?"

As I spoke, the ship rocked hard and a horn sounded. "We're under attack!" The aliens scattered, leaving me alone. Suddenly, I was laying on the steps in front of my house. I have no idea what happened. Maybe it was a dream. But the alien explanation for this market seems as plausible as any I've heard lately.

FOUR REASONS WHT PORTABLET



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Pentium vs. Pentium Pro

Take our word for it: Recalculating a 4,260-page spreadsheet on a 150MHz system—or better yet, on a 200MHz PC—rocks you back on your heels. It takes as little as 80 seconds.

chart redraws included.

Is this level of performance attainable only from some back-room lab project at Intel? Not at all. You'll see it in the first 150MHz Pentium-based systems from Micron and Robotech, and the first 200MHz Pentium Pro-based system, Dell's Dimension XFS Pro-200.

All three define the upper limit of tokad's PC performance.

Which system and CPU is faster? That depends on your applications and operating system. Like the first 150MHz Pentium Pro-based systems, the 200MHz Dimension performs no better than a 133MHz Pentium under Windows 3x apps. Give it 32-bit apps, however, and its

performance is downright exhilarating. Outfitted with Windows NT and 32MB of RAM, the machine performed nearly 300 percent faster than Micron's P133 Millennia 133MHz Pentium on native Windows NT spreadsheet benchmarks.

To the Limit The 200MHz clock speed specially shines in floating-point chores. Running Deneba Software's Carvas illustration software, for example, the Dimension XPS Pro200 was nearly twice as fast as Micron's P133 Millennia, and 33 percent faster than Dell's own Dimension XPS Pro150. It showed a similar advantage under North Coast Software's PhotoMorph.

As you'd expect, the XPS Pro200 backs up its computational prowess. The machine we tested came with 32MB of RAM, expandable to 128MB. A 2.1GB hard drive is standard equipment, as is a 17-inch monitor and six-speed CD-ROM drive. Add a second hard drive, and you can pack as much as 4.2GB of data in your workstation. You have a choice between two video accelerators from Number Nine—the Imagine 128 or the Motion card. (We tested the Imagine 128 with 4MB of VR AM.)

For running native productivity apps under Windows NT or OS/2, there's little to be gained using the 200MTLx version of the Dimension; the 150MTLx model delivers more than adequate performance. But for advanced modeling, CAD, and very high-end graphics, the \$5,999 XTS Pro200 provides workstation-class performance. In fact, you may never have to lay our megabucks for a RISC system again.

Power to the Plebes Of course, the number of native Windows NT apps on the market won't exactly bowl you over. Many of us will be working under Windows 95 well into the future. And for Windows 95, a basic Pentium packs

almost as much power (and under some applications, more power) for far less money.

Meanwhile, the muchdelayed 150MHz and 166MHz Pentiums have finally arrived. Robotech and Micron are each introducing both, although the 166MHz Pentium systems didn't arrive in time for our testing. The price difference between the Robotech systems is \$100 (the 150MHz model costs \$3,745 as tested; the 166MHz model will cost \$3,845)-small enough to opt for the faster of the two, purse strings providing, Likewise, the price difference between the 150MHz and 166MHz Micron systems is a slim \$200.

Robotech's Cobra XLT lagged slightly behind Micron's P150 Millennia in Windows application tests. Even the 133MHz Micron P133 Millennia scored faster than the Cobra. This may owe largely to the Cobra's BIOS, which was in beta. Company officials say the shipping version is faster.

The 'Cobra ships loaded with extras, which should give bargain hunters pause. Its performance is backed by 16MB of EDO RAM (expandable to 164MB), a 512K L2 cache, Quantum's screaming-fast 1GB Fireball Enhanced IDE (EIDE) hard drive, and Diamond's Steath 64 video card with 2MB of VRAM (expandable to 4MB).

But don't overlook the extras. You'll also find Teac's six-speed CD-ROM drive, Cobra's own wavetable audio card, and a three-piece Yamaha speaker system with a separate subwoofer. Boca Research's

OVERVIEW Intel's Fastest: 150MHz and 200MHz CPUs



Spit Seconds: Micron's 150/MFZ
Pentium was only slightly faster than a
133MHz Pentium under Windows 95.
Clock speeds really make a difference
under floating-point operations.



200MHz Pentium Pros run evenly on basic NT apps. Under graphics and floating-point chores, however, the 200MHz machine is faster.



Upper Limit: Dell's 200MHz Dimension XPS Pro200 (front) is the fastest PC you can buy for running 32-bit Windows NT applications. For Windows 95 apps, 150MHz Pentiums like Robotech's Cobra XLT (back) and Micron's P150 Millennia (left) offer more for the money.

28.8Kbps fax modem is included in the price, as are a 17-inch monitor and Novell's PerfectOffice, Clearly, Robotech wants the machine to stand out for its dollar value in an intimidatingly crowded field.

One for the Money As with the Cobra, Micron's P150 Millennia comes with 16MB of EDO RAM, Quantum's 1.3GB Fireball EIDE hard drive, and Diamond's Stealth 64 Video with 2MB of VRAM, The P150 Millennia uses a smaller 256K L2 cache. yet it outperformed the Cobra in application benchmark tests. This is due largely to a more efficient cache.

Beyond straight performance, the machines differ in their particulars. The P150 Millennia comes with a quadspeed CD-ROM drive; and a six-speed version will be standard by the time you read this. It features Creative Labs' Sound Blaster Vibra16 audio card and Advent speakers. The standard monitor is a 15-inch model; a 17-inch monitor costs extra.

And its price? As configured, the Millennia costs an eye-popping \$3,348. Ante up for the 166MHz version (\$3,548) with a 17-inch monitor, and you'll still pay well under \$4,000. The extra cost for Dell's Dimension XPS Pro200 makes sense if you plan to migrate to Windows NT, OS/2, or AIX in the near future and you expect to run native high-end graphics or engineering applications under these operating systems. Otherwise, the 150MHz Dimension XPS Pro150 is a better bet for basic business applications running under Windows NT.

Meanwhile, mainstream Windows 95 applications are flourishing, and the newly arriving 150MHz 166MHz Pentium systems such as Micron's P150 Millennia and Robotech's Cobra XLT will make these programs sing. Welcome the new sweet spot in desktop power and performance. When the two systems are similarly configured, Micron's P150 Millennia is cheaper and runs slightly faster than Robotech's Cobra XLT. But neither machine will steer you wrong. MARTY JEROME

FILEBOX

Cobra XLT

Usability Performance *** Technology ***

Great dollar value if Windows 95 is your ticket to the future. Features as Tested: 150MHz

Pentium, 16MB of RAM, 1.2GB hard drive, 512K cache, 6X CD-ROM drive 17-inch monitor

\$3,745 est, street price Reader Service No. 671

Dimension XPS Pro200

Usahility Performance Technology Verdict

Stunning performance awaits native Windows NT apps. Features as Tested: 200MHz

Pentium Pro. 32MB of RAM. 1.2GB hard drive, 6X CD-ROM drive, 17-inch monitor,

\$5,999 est, street price Dell Computer Corp. (800) 289-3355 Reader Service No. 672

P150 Millennia

Usability Performance Technology alc alc alc alc Verdict The fastest way to run Windows 95.

Features as Tested: 150MHz Pentium, 16MB of RAM, 1GB hard drive, 256K cache, 4X CD-ROM drive, 17-inch monitor,

\$3,348 est, street price Micron Electronics (800) 347-3490

Reader Service No. 673

PRESENTING SOFTWAR BEINGS IN PARALLEL UNI AND BROWSE THE

(THAT'S UNDER DEVELOPMENT. IN THE MEANTIME, YOU CAN'T GET MORE ADVANCED COMMUNICATIONS SOFTWAR THAN NEW DELRINA COMMSUITE 95 FOR WINDOWS 95.)

If you're like most people, less than one percent of all your friends and business associates reside in parallel universes. Which means that new Delrina CommSuite" 95 should suit you just fine.

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integrates with MS*
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into a voice mail system that takes messages, distinguishes between fax and voice calls, has Fax on Demand, and an integrated in-box for faxes, voice messages and e-mail.

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E THAT LETS YOU FAX TERSES, E-MAIL CLEOPATRA INTERGALACTIONET.

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you get all the Net tools you need

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The second of th

With TalkWorks, the WinFax PRO telephony option, all of your messages - faxes, e-mail and voice mail - come together in one convenient place.

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Secretarian March Control Cont

PINE CHI-ING MANAGE

Monitor the status of your communications activities with the Delrina CommBar.™



detection built-in. It even lets you download files in the background. A All in all, it's the perfect communications solution for Windows 95. And if you can't e-mail Cleopatra, don't despair. These long distance relationships seldom work DELRINA

Circle 183 on reader service card.

STORY TELLING.



TELLING STORY.

Two independent labs proved the U.S. Robotics Sportster V.34 modem outperforms the leading external 28.8 modems. That's not hype. It's fact. And it's what we and our customers have known all along.

TeleQuality Associates and Henderson Communications Laboratories put today's popular 28.800 bps V.34 modems up against the Sportster. And guess what - the Sportster outperformed them all.

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The Sportster achieved the highest connect success rate scores, demonstrating a consistent ability to connect at top speeds. The differences were dramatic, with some brands connecting only 40% as often!

SPORTSTER PROVED BEST IN COMPATIBILITY.

Paired in every possible combination. the Sportster with True V.34™ topped them all in test after test. In fact, the Sportster proved more compatible with several of the other brands than those modems were with their own brand.

SPORTSTER TOPS

IN THROUGHPUT, TOO. Even under the widest array of line conditions, U.S. Robotics Sportster came in first, delivering up to 177% more data. Which makes the bottom line simple: If you're in the market for a V.34 modem. you can listen to a lot of stories. Or you can check out the facts. Call us for a summary report on the test methodology and findings.

- 8 0 0 - D I A L - U S R



















NEC MultiSpin 4x4 CD-ROM Changer

CD-ROM Goes into 4x4 Overdrive

SNEAK PREVIEW

Loading a disc into your CD-ROM drive should be as easy as putting bread into a toaster. With NEC

bread into a toaster. With NEC Technologies' new internal quad-speed MultiSpin 4x4 CD-ROM Changer, it is. The Multi-Spin 4x4 not only holds up to four CDs at a time (bye-bye, CD shuffle), it costs a mere \$279—making it one of the most irresistible CD-ROM drives to come along in years.

The MultiSpin 454 doesn't rely on caddies, trusy, or multidies magazines to house CDs. Instead, in receives dists through one slot. Internal motorized arms suck them in a slotted magazine cartridge at the back of the drive. An elevator mechanism then shuffles the disea as needed. Best of offall, the MultiSpin takes up no more space than a single-dist CD-ROM drive.

Rack 'Em Up To load a dies, you just push one of the four numbered buttons on the from of the drive to select the internal slot you want. When the drive's door opens, pop in a dies. If the slot you've chosen already has a CD in it, the MultiSpin ejects it and waits for you to insert the new one. Status lights seide each button indicate the occupied slots, and which dies is befine read.

When you select a CD, it's moved into position against the drive's read head. The Multi-Spin reads only one disc at a time, but unlike other multidisc drives (such as Aiwa's ACD-630), it can't read one disc while ejecting or inserting other discs. The control panel has a headphone iack with a



Four-Disc Drive: NEC's trim, quad-speed MultiSpin 4x4 CD-ROM Changer holds up to four CDs at a time—no caddies required. Inside the drive, a slotted magazine moves the discs into position as needed.

NEC's MultiSpin 4x4 definitely isn't the fastest quadspeed CD-ROM drive available;

Basic Quad:

speed CD-ROM drive available; its performance was about average in our early speed tests.

CD Spin	
Data Throughput	
	143% Faster
PLEXTOR 6PLEX	
6.5	111% Faster
NEC COR-273 (4X DRIVE)	
	Baseline
NEC MULTISPIN 4X4	
NOTE WINBENCH 96'S CO-ROM HEMMARK TES MEASURES AVERAGE DATA THROUGHPUT	

volume control, but it lacks audio-CD controls. To listen to music, you have to use a software-based control panel.

You can set up the Multi-Spin by assigning a separate drive letter to each of the four internal slots, or assigning one drive letter to all of them with NEC's own CD manager utility. The latter is often necessary because some CD-ROMs must be loaded from a particu-

lar drive letter each time. Although the MultiSpin 4x4 isn't Plug and Play—compatible, installation is easy. The drive uses an Enhanced IDE interface, and an adapter board is also included for IDE-based systems.

The Trade-offs The Multi-Spin 444's excellent usability and low price make it a superb choice for desktop systems. However, its four-CD limit and ten-second switching time make it a poor choice for network file servers. In our tests, an early perporduction model yielded typical quad-speed CD-ROM data-transfer rates. The average access time was an unregnardable 65ms but the

FILEBOX

MultiSpin 4x4 CD-ROM Changer

Usability **
Performance *
Technology ***

A four-disc, quad-speed CD-ROM drive for \$279? Everybody should have one.

Competition: Panasonic's Big 5 of others a fine-disc quad-speed change for less than \$3.00. Tutle Beach Systems has a three-disc quad-speed drive for around \$2.0 McE do no make the \$348 WMIISpin dXc, a drive the \$348 WMIISpin dXc, and quad-speed performance. Umax functions of the speed for the performance of the first performance of the first performance of the first performance of the quad-speed performance. Umax for the performance of performance of the first performance of performance of first performance first performance of first performance of first performanc

Features as Tested: 128K buffer, EIDE interface, caddyless four-disc changer.

\$279 est. street price NEC Technologies (800) 632-4636, (508) 264-8000 Reader Service No. 674

drive's CPU overhead—a measure of how much processor power the drive demands—was a relatively low 46 percent.

a retartively low 40 percent.

If performance is a critical issue, consider the new crop of fast CD-ROM drives, including Umax Technologies' \$269 internal six-speed MaxMedia CD-IS601 and Toshiba's \$415 6.7-speed carrenal XM-3701. But if it's the convenience of a multidise drive you want, along with decent performance at a great price, the MultiSpin 4x4 is your best buy. DUAN WEMEN

Guide to the Ratings:

**** Excellent

**** Good

*** Acceptable

**Poor

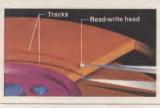
* Unacceptable

First-class Color, Lavish Price



Living Large: Xerox's sizable 108-pound XPrint 4920 supports 600dpi color-laser output as well as PostScript Level 2. Tokenring and Ethernet network connections are optional.

Spectrum of Color: The XPrint 4920 does a fine job with business-graphic images such as color charts, illustrations, and presentations. But our tests found that photographic output is not as sharp as that of Apple's Color Laser Witter 12/600 PS, which is more affordable.



Color laser printers may not be getting cheaper, but they are getting smarter and easier to use. Case in point: Xerox's 4900 XPrint series. Street prices for the second-generation XPrint color lasers range from \$6,206 to a lofty \$8,546, but gains in output quality and usability are outstanding.

The XPrint printers are available in three models: the 4915, 4920, and 4925. Each printer is built around the same engine, but resolutions vary, with the 4915 capable of 1,200-by-300 dpi, and the 4920 dpi. We tested the midrange \$7,196 XPrint 4920.

Installing the XPrint 4920 is painless. The toner and developer cartridges, fuser, and photoreceptor are all in place. A large, illustrated poster walks you through each step. The only grunt work involved is a two-minute oil-bottle installation and software setup.

No Dirty Work The XPrint 4920's drivers are some of the best we've seen. They cover everything from detailed descriptions of extra-cost options to tips on how to best use color in your documents. Within your applications, the easy-to-use tabbed driver interface controls document options. Intelligent Color, similar to Hewlett-Packard's ColorSmart for Windows, automatically recognizes the difference between text and graphics, and adjusts the print quality so you get the best results.

You'll find the XPrint 4920's output impressive. Text output has improved substantially over that of the firstgeneration 4900 machines—it's much sharper with less tonier splatter. Color graphic images are sharp and bright, although photographic images weren't as crisp as those of Apple's Color LaserWirer 12/600 PS.

Net Results Designed to sit at the end of a network, the XPrint 4920 is fast. It churned

FILEBOX

to use, but pricey,

XPrint 4920
Usability ****
Performance ***
Technology ****
Verdict ***
Nice-looking output and easy

Competition: QMS's colorlaser printers use the same engine as that of Xerox's XPrint 4920, but don't include the same outstanding software. Apple's Color LaserWriter 12/600 PS includes network compatibility, has comparable speed and quality, and costs

Features as Tested: 24MB of RAM (16MB standard, expandable to 48MB), Adobe PostScript Level 2.

Resolution: Up to 600 dpi. Cost Per Page: 2.9 cents for standard black text and

Cost Per Page: 2.9 cents for standard black text and graphics, 20 cents per page for color with 20 percent coverage.

57,196 est, street price (57,675 as tested, with an additional 8MB of RAM) Xerox Corp. (800) 349-3769, (716) 442-4028 Reader Service No. 675

out a 50-page document sprinkled with graphics in just over 6 minutes; and a 3-page presentation loaded with color printed in less than 4 minutes. The XPrint's speeds are comparable to those of QMS's similarly designed magicolor LX. With optional \$548 Ethernet or \$715 Token Ring kits, the XPrint 4920 will satisfy office network needs.

The XPrint printers are fine products offering great software and first-rate output. The only drawback is price. Apple's comparable Color LaserWriter 12/600 PS has built-in networking support, yet costs \$600 less. KYLA K. CARLSON

Guide to the Ratings:

**** Excellent

**** Good

*** Acceptable

**Poor

* Unacceptable



Network-Ready Pentium Power

Here's a statist that will probably surprise vor The average five

year co t of owning servicing, and upgrading a notworked PC in a typical business exceeds \$40,000.

Sound outragrous? Not when you conside the cists of setup, appendes, support, and maintenance for a nerworked PC. Aimed squarely a cutting those costs are two new network-ready 133MHz 24m-titums—Dell's OptiPles GN 5133 and Hewlett-Packard? Veetra VI. Series 4 MT. While HPs Veetra is slightly faster, Dell's OptiPles offers the most value with more disk space and a lower sticker price.

Plug and Port Bods sestems have built in 10Bases? Ethernet controllers for notworking, The Optilles sports 3/Com's integrated parallel tasking Ethernet controllerthe Vectra has Hewders Packard's comparable Fither net adapter. Slapping an Ethernet controller on the mother/soard, however, is no ground/breaking lear. What makes these systems ligmones-swares is their implementation of the Desktop Management parties. PMM

Developed in 1992 by : group of industre leading companies. DMI bets wor monitor hundreds of starstick on networked PCs, including case and mostel serial number, RAM and har drive configurations, and types of accessory boards. DMI also monitors software over a net work to a support staff can track licenses and automatically update them before they expre. With information like this at the fingertips of your support staff (a) downtime and support staff (a) when the property of your support staff (a) downtime and the support staff (a) downtime and support



HPs Vectra VL are 133MHz, network-ready Pentium systems designed to reduce network-management costs. Both include built-in Ethemet and rasy-to-use Desktop Management Interface software.

Net-Wired: With its 1GB Quantum Fireball hard drive, HP's Vectra VL4 slightly outperforms Dell's OptiPlex GX 5133. Dell's OptiPlex, however,



FILEBOX

OptiPlex GX 5133

Usability ***
Performance ***
Technology ***
Verdict ***
A network-ready bargain.

Features as Tested: 133MHz Pentium, 1-MB of RAM, 1.6GB hard on k, nuad spied IDE

So harest streety i e Doll/ original (Yan h/14-a2) Readers virial Vo. 676

Vectra VL Series 4 NIT

Usability
Performance
Technology
Verdict **

Verdict ***
An easy-to-manage, highspeed network node.

Features as Tested: 133MHz Centium, 16MB of RAM, 16B hard disk gliad-speed IDE CD ROM live 15 inch mention Ethereat controller

S'.8% eit stretprice Hewlit-Picke if

matically. The support statt can monitor the entire office from one machine, without any interruptions on the network. With your network's information centralized, it

Packard preload the DMI sair ware to their systems. In borcases, the software was easy it use and administer, and versuseful for tracking system information across a network Look for DMI to become the networking standard in the mouths ahead.

Both machines perform

application resis. The Veetsbal a sleght edge own the Cipallies in our performance, partial office or its reproduct Marrow William with Milliam and could be stored. Eather treat the world by the stored of the month of the performance of the only world by the stored of the only the performance of the peroration of the performance of the peroration of the performance of the performance of the peroration of the performance of the performance of the peroration of the performance of the performance of the peroration of the performance of the performance of the perpendicular of the performance of the performance of the peroration of the performance of the performance of the peroration of the performance of the performance of the peroration of the performance of the performance of the peroration of the performance of the performance of the peroration of the performance of the performance of the performance of the peroration of the performance of the

Speed and Value The Vectra's performance advantage was partially thanks to its top-notch 1GB Quantum for ball lind drive, which was slightly faster than the

Ostalba s 1.6GB Western Digital hard drive. The perternance difference, how and chough to converge to OptiPlex's extr months of board disk space. Borkha Van a VI. and the

both the visita VL and the Oppelles (IX 543) herald a new era for simple network manuscane. The DMI standard means but savings on import and manuscane coefficient and the constant of the visitable of the oppelles of the oppelles of the visitable of the oppelles of

Guide to the Ratir

***** Excelle

**** (30

*** Accepta

** Pos

· Unacceptable



Double-Duty Digital Modems

Speeds for analog modems are hitting the wall, while ISDN lines are cheaper than ever. So what's everyone waiting for? While many online services and Internet-service providers have moved into the digital future, many more handle connections only from regular analog modems. If you're ready for an ISDN speed boost, but still need to connect to some analog-only sites, a hybrid ISDN-analog modem is your best bet.

We tested two new digital modems: U.S. Robotics' Courier I-Modem and 3Com's Impact. While the Courier was slightly easier to set up and twice as fast on the analog end (28.8Kbps), the Impact costs about \$200 less and supports multilink Point-to-Point Protocol (PPP) connections at ISDN's top speed, a lightningfast transfer rate of 128Kbps.

Uncertain Connections Setting up an ISDN connection has never been easy, and we struggled to properly configure both the Courier and the Impact. Neither unit comes with Windows 95 modemconfiguration files, so you have to type in all the hardware and connection settings manually. The Courier's software has a slight edge over the Impact's. since it comes with a test module that warns you if you're hooked up incorrectly. However, both products could benefit from improved usability in this area. Each comes with run-of-the-mill communications and fax software.

Unless you know the inside scoop on how ISDN works or you don't mind tinkering, you'll probably need a professional to hook you up. Between remembering modem commands and determining



Bridge to ISDN: Digital modems that combine an ISDN adapter with an analog modem deliver the best of both worlds, U.S. Robotics' Courier I-Modem (left) hits speeds of up to 28.8Kbps for analog and 64Kbps for ISDN: 3Com's Impact connects at up to 14.4Kbps for analog and a speedy 128Kbps for ISDN.



which line goes where, setting up can be a hairy business. Once they're up and run-

ning, both modems work well. And both have NT-1 termination, which means you can use multiple channels at the same time for voice, fax, or data transmissions. The big difference is the

Impact's support for multilink PPP. It combines two 64Kbps channels, making the Impact twice as fast as the Courier. (U.S. Robotics will offer a free flash upgrade for multilink capabilities within the next few months.) Keep in mind that although the speed of multilink

PPP is impressive, only one national Internet provider-PSI-currently supports it. Other major online services will offer support for the protocol in the near future.

Double Time The Courier is the clear winner for analogmodem performance, thanks to its 28.8Kbps fax modem, Ironically, while the Impact offers the highest speed available for ISDN, it supports yesterday's 14.4Kbps modern speeds on the analog side. The Courier also has slightly better fax and analog compatibility, supporting the v.34 standard and ensuring complete compatibility. The

FILEBOX

nerformance.

Courier I-Modem Usability Performance Technology Verdict The best choice for solid ISDN and 28 8Khns analog-modem

Features: Single-link PPP (up to 64Khns), 28 8Khns analogfax modem, built-in NT-1 adapter, Quicklink II. communications software.

U.S. Robotics (800) 877-2677, (708) 982-5010 Reader Service No. 678

Impact Usability Performance **** Technology **** Verdict A mixed bag: Fast 128Kbps ISDN speeds, but only 14.4Kbps on the analog side. Features: Multilink PPP (up to 128Kbps), 14.4Kbps analog-fax modem, built-in NT-1 adapter, TurboCom 2, Delrina's WinFax

3Com Corp. (800) 638-3266, (408) 764-5000 Reader Service No. 679

Lite and WinComm Lite

Impact is still at v.32.

While ISDN is becoming a reliable standard, it's not perfect. With a hybrid analog-ISDN modem, all of your online bases are covered. 3Com's Impact is the ISDN speed demon. Unfortunately, its analog component is limited to 14.4Kbps. U.S. Robotics' Courier I-Modem is easier to set up and use, has analog speeds of up to 28.8Kbps, and should support multilink PPP within the next few months. If vou don't already have a 28.8Kbps modem and want to move to ISDN, the Courier is vour best bet. JACK LYON

An avid Windows® 95 user. But has never clicked on MSN."



Click and get one free month with unlimited hours.

The Microsoft Network icon has been sitting on your desktop for some time now, isn't it about time you gave our online service a try? MSN is the best way to access and use the internet. And your first month of unlinted usage is absolutely free. All you have to do is point. And click.



To launch Wind

used 4 networks,

85 magazines,

100 radio stations

and, ahem,

one server.

ws 95, they



TO POWER THE
ON-LINE LAUNCH OF WINDOWS* 95,
MICROSOFT CHOSE THE
DIGITAL PRIORIS* HX 590DP SERVER.

Failure was not an option on August 24.
Microsoft's official launch date for
Windows⁶ 95 marked the biggest new
product introduction in industry history,
not to mention one of the great all-out
media blitzes. On this day, a minor glitch
would have made headlines. So when all
eyes turned to Microsoft-Microsoft
turned to Digital.

For the on-line launch of Windows[®]
95, Microsoft plugged in the Digital
Prioris Internet server—ten of them, in
fact. A decade of Microsoft/Digital
teamwork was behind the decision. So



was the simple realization that, for a job that meant handling almost

day, the Prioris HX 590DP was simply the best server around. After all, its fault tolerant features do include drive arrays, ECC memory, redundant cooling systems and power supplies. Put simply, Microsoft chose Digital for the same reasons you should. Reliability. Power. And no slip-ups.

Call 1-800 DIGITAL for your nearest rescller or visit our Web Site at www.pc.digital.com.



No-Fuss Family PCs

Looking for the ultimate multimedia system? You don't have to buy it à la carte to get the best components. Two new Pentium PCs for the home or office from Compag and Packard Bell put top-drawer multimedia components in astonishingly affordable packages.

Compag's Presario 9564 and Packard Bell's Designer Tower are minitower systems that offer PCI-based local-bus video controllers with 1MB of fast video RAM (uperadable to 2MB) and generous 1.6GB hard drives filled with applications. Windows 95 zips along on both systems, thanks to their 133MHz processors and 16MB of memory.

Each system also includes a 15-inch, high-resolution multimedia monitor and fullduplex speakers to blast away your computing ennui. And you'll find state-of-the-art communications centers on each, from which you can conveniently manage your phone calls, faxes, and e-mail.

Variations on a Theme What are the differences between the two? You'll pay about \$3,498 for Compag's Presario, while Packard Bell's Designer Tower costs \$500 less. For the extra money, you'll find some advantages with the Presario, including hardware MPEG 1 video for full-screen movies at up to 30 frames per second, wavetable audio, a 64-bit PCI video adapter, and a 28.8Kbps fax modem. Packard Bell's Designer Tower offers a less fancy package with software MPEG video, FM-synthesis audio, a 32-bit video adapter, and a 14.4Kbps fax modem. One minor glitch in the Designer Tower system is the strange way its speakers attach



Power-Packed: There's little you won't find in these two multimedia systems, Compag's Presario 9564 (left) and Packard Bell's Designer Tower each ship with an impressive array of hardware and software for the entire family. Your home will never be the same.

A Slight Edge: The Presario 9564 was only slightly faster than the Designer Tower when running Windows 95 apps. despite its



to the monitor. Other manufacturers just have you slide the speakers onto pre-attached brackets on either side of the monitor and simply plue them in. The Designer Tower requires that you use a small tool and screw in the speakers. which is needlessly difficult.

more powerful

components.

As the flagship of Compag's home PC line, the Presario is bristling with the best components money can buy. You haven't seen or heard anything until you've experienced a CD-ROM-based movie on the Presario. Compag is the first company to combine hardware MPEG video with hardware-based wavetable audio, and the results are impressive.

The Designer Tower's multimedia offerings are a bit more modest than the Presario's, but impressive nonetheless. In our Windows 95 multimedia application tests. the Designer Tower lagged only slightly behind the

Many Faces With the Presario, vou get to choose from among four desktop interfaces for Windows 95, although only Launch Pad is noteworthy as a fun and useful way for kids to compute and parents to supervise. By comparison, the house-with-rooms

FILEBOX

a terrific price

Designer Tower Usability **** Performance Technology **** *** Lots of multimedia power for

Features as Tested: 133MHz Pentium 16MR of RAM 1 6GR hard drive, quad-speed CD-ROM drive 14 4Khns fax modem with voice messaging.

Packard Bell Flectronics (800) 733-5858 Reader Service No. 680

Presario 9564

Usability **** Performance **** Technology Verdict *** If they put any more in this box, it would burst. Features as Tested: 133MHz

Pentium, 16MB of RAM, 1,6GB hard drive, quad-speed IDE CD-ROM drive, 28,8Kbps fax modem with voice messaging.

\$3,498 est, street price (800) 345-1518 Reader Service No. 681

metaphor of the Designer Tower's Navigator interface is a visually rich alternative to Windows 95's starkness—it's the best choice for novices and children.

Packard Bell's Designer Tower and Compaq's Presario 9564 are both great systems, with almost all the add-ons you could ever need. The Presario will set you back about \$500 more, but you'll get slightly better multimedia performance for your money, as well as a more sophisticated monitor. On a tighter budget? You can't go wrong with Packard Bell's Designer Tower. MIKE HOGAN



Circle 376 on reader service card.

Wired from the Palm of Your Hand

The days of jotting everything down in your leather-bound Day-Timer are far from over. But with the latest personal digital assistants (PDAs) from Hewlett-Packard and Sony, they're definitely numbered

Hewlett-Packard's OmniGo 100 Organizer Plus is a personal organizer that helps you manage appointments, lists, and contacts. Sony's Magic Link PIC-2000 does these things too. but it also offers robust communication tools and handles several online functions, including e-mail and faxing. At \$349, the OmniGo is a useful, hand-held digital organizer. But if you need to stay connected, the \$699 Magic Link is a better choice.

Get It Together Weighing under a pound, HP's OmniGo includes some useful options not found in competing products, like keyboard- and penbased input. The keyboard's tiny, Chiclet-size keys take some getting used to, so you can opt for pen input with Palm Computing's built-in Graffiti handwriting-recognition. Flexibility is another strength-you can flip back the OmniGo's display 360 degrees, fold it behind the keyboard. and easily rotate it between portrait and landscape views.

Unlike HP's DOS-based LX line of palmtop computers, the OmniGo is based on Geoworks' Geos, an efficient, graphical operating system with low resource requirements-ideal for portable devices. In fact, many OmniGo applications-including an appointment calendar, phone book, notepad, spreadsheet, and calculator-are burned into 3MB of Geos ROM, giving you all the standard apps without taking up any storage space. The OmniGo also



In Touch from Anywhere: Don't want to lug around a laptop just to access appointment information? HP's OmniGo 100 (right) is a great little organizer with a flexible display. Sony's Magic Link PIC-2000 (left) goes beyond that, adding communication power.



includes 1MB of RAM and a Type II PC Card slot.

Simply Magical Sonv's Magic Link PIC-2000 goes beyond basic information management, adding e-mail, a speakerphone, fax and paging communications, and online services, to form an unbeatable high-end PDA.

The Magic Link uses Magic Cap, an intuitive, graphical operating system that includes Telescript, an intelligent agent technology useful for electronic transactions. For example, you can use the Magic Link to browse for and purchase airline tickets through the Official Airline Guide. The Magic Link

includes 2MB of RAM, a backlit screen, and dual Type II PC Card slots. Most input is penbased, but there's an optional full-size, flyweight keyboardwhich is essential for entering a lot of information. The Magic Link also includes an infrared port and a 14.4Kbps fax modem that connects to several online and Internet e-mail services such as AT&T's PersonaLink, Active Paper's PrestoMail, and America Online. If you want to go wireless, a few cellular-phone connectors are available, including Nokia's new Nokia 232.

As a hand-held organizer. the OmniGo is a powerful

FILEBOX

Magic Link PIC-2000 Usability Technology Verdict The best way to communicate from the palm of your hand.

Competition: Motorola's Envoy

offers wireless communication.

but costs twice as much. \$699 est, street price (800) 556-2442

OmniGo 100 **Organizer Plus**

Usability Technology Verdict The smart, affordable hand-held organizer.

Competition: Competitors include Sharp Electronics' Zaurus, Psion's Series 3a, and Casio's Organizers. The OmniGo is the only one that includes handwriting recognition and a

rotatable display. \$349 est, street price

Reader Service No. 683

choice at a reasonable price. For twice the price, Sony's Magic Link goes further, adding easier desktop connectivity and myriad communication options.

Meanwhile, Palm Computing (the same company that developed Graffiti) is working on a product code-named Touchdown, a card-deck-size digital organizer that keeps track of your meetings, contacts, and notes. For around \$299, Touchdown will link to your desktop, acting more as a portable peripheral than a standalone PDA. Depending on your needs, Touchdown, due out by mid-year, might be worth wait-RICH SCHWERIN ing for.

Guide to the Ratings:

From the world leader in Windows graphics software

With an incredible selection of clipart, fonts, photos and phrases plus flexible design tools, Corel Print House is the fastest and easiest way for everyone to create great-looking greeting cards, stationery, banners and more!

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COREL

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The fun way to learn



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Bernard of Hollywood's Marilyn's A multamedia journey through



Erner the Corel \$3,000,000 World Design Contest and worl (September 95 to July 96) To receive a faxed copy of the rules and an entry form please call: 1-613-728-0826 ed. 3050, Document #1125. To leave a massage please call: 1-613-728-0826 ed. 81609



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Circle 231 on reader service card.

Land the state of the state of

First generation business-card scanners were big on promises and small on delivery. Scan times were slow, OCR was hit-or-miss, and it was easier and safer to type in the information by hand. The newest business-card scanners from CypherTech, Corex Technologies, and Matsushita make managing those little rectangles of paper more convenient by including direct hooks to personal information managers (PIMs), intelligent scanning software, and batch processing. With all of these scanners, however, there's still room for OCR improvement.

It's in the Cards Cypher-Tech's CypherScan 2000 uses the same hardware as Umax Technologies' BizCard Reader, so you feed the cards into the side of the device. The accompanving CypherScan 4.0 software includes high-end contact-management features like customizable fields, search functions, and tabs for notes. It takes the software about 12 seconds to recognize and process each card.

Corex's CardScan is similar to the CypherScan 2000. Both take up less space than a paperback book. Stick a card facedown into each scanner, press the Scan button, and the OCR engine reads the contents and displays the card on a Rolodexlike screen. Save records in the included database software, or send the scanned cards directly to your favorite PIM or database. Both scanners process one card at a time, but if you prefer to load several cards at once you can defer the OCR process until all the cards have been pushed through. The software for both scanners separates data into the proper fields.

The CardScan's software provides fewer sorting and



left) and CypherScan combine card scanners with contact software. The Panasonic NeoFile Business Card Reader shoehorns everything into a PDA.

Spotty OCR: CypherTech's CypherScan 4.0 software drops scanned information right into your favorite PIM, but its OCR accuracy varies widely by card.



FILEBOX

CardScan Usahility Technology *** Verdict A simple way to scan cards.

\$199 est, street price (800) 942-6739, (617) 277-5344

CypherScan 2000 Usability Technology Verdict Compact scanner with great

\$199 est, street price (800) 294-7226 Reader Service No. 68s

software.

Panasonic NeoFile **Business Card Reader** Usability Technology Verdict PDA and card scanner in one.

(201) 348-9090 Reader Service No. 686

viewing options, but has a cleaner, simpler interface. Like the CypherScan, the CardScan uses a Rolodex metaphor to store cards, takes about 12 seconds to process cards, and hooks directly into most major PIMs. You place cards on a bed in the center of the unitnot on the side-which helps prevent reading errors.

Marsushita's Panasonic NeoFile Business Card Reader uses a completely different approach. It acts as a standalone contact manager and personal digital assistant (PDA), and includes a flip-up LCD screen, a tiny but functional QWERTY keyboard with 66 keys, and an unusual sidemounted scanner. You can keep your contact database on this sleek minisystem or export it to a full-fledged PIM via the \$125 add-on serial port and cable. It holds approximately 500 records in memory. The software includes a calendar, contact database, calculator, and world map with corresponding time zones. Take it with you to conventions and meetings, and scan cards on the spot. It weighs less than a pound and operates on three AAA batteries.

Read the Results All three scanners continue to stumble in the most important area of all: OCR accuracy. Although recognizing phone and fax numbers is straightforward, tiny typefaces, fancy

fonts, and dark backgrounds stumped all of these readers. The CardScan and CypherScan 2000, for example, accurately read about three out of every ten cards, The Panasonic NeoFile's OCR performance was even shakier. In the worst cases, correcting the OCR typos took more time than keying in the cards by hand.

If you want to dump your stack of cards into a PIM and don't mind correcting the frequent inaccuracies, the Card-Scan and CypherScan 2000 get the job done. Use the Panasonic NeoFile Business Card Reader only if you're scanning cards on the go. But for important cards, key in the data. JAMES OLIVER CURY

*** Acceptable

**Poor

* Unacceptable

Gateway 2000



Portable PCs

urora borealis. The erfect excuse to get away. Made sure the battery on my Gateway Solo™ S5-120XL multimedia projections could wait.

notebook was charged, fueled up the truck and headed north. Second quarter

I watched Mother Nature's display dance across the northern sky. And life just emed to make sense. Looking at my Gateway

Solo S5-120XL multimedia notebook I thought, this machine also makes perfect sense. Think of it. A powerful 120MHz Intel® Pentium® processor, active matrix SVGA color display, 40MB RAM, whopping 1.2GB hard drive, and CD-ROM drive. All the power of a high-end multimedia desktop in a portable package. Who needs more?

A German opera filled the night.

I was deep in thought. Thanks to the swappable CD-ROM drive and integrated speakers, features found on all models of the Gateway Solo

multimedia notebook line, my favorite German opera

filled the night.

Suddenly I heard hoofbeats.



Turning I found myself face to chest with a large white horse.

"Hello madam." said the uniformed man atop the horse.

"Is that a Gateway 2000 portable? What a coincidence. I have one too!"

Desktop power that fits on a horse.

He reached into his pack and pulled out a Gateway Solo S5-75XL notebook. "My S5-75XL is loaded with a 75MHz Pentium processor, 8MB RAM, and 540MB hard drive. With the 16-bit sound, stereo

speakers and a CD-ROM

More co mor(

drive. I can use multimedia applications anywhere.

Even in the boondocks. And

the active matrix color display provides a great view."

This value-packed system is ideal for the professional person or the go such as myself. And the best part, it fits on a horse," he said with a smile. "Gateway 2000" is the place to go for great values on portable PCs. And while you can compute anywhere, I must ask you to cease and desist." I gave him a



questioning look. He continued, "It's mating season for many of our furry friends and we wouldn't want the glow from your

active matrix color display ruining their plans. Thank you madam and enjoy your evening." And with a tip of his hat, off he rode.

My commune with nature over, I found an offbeat diner and stopped in for some food. I felt someone watching me. As I

scanned the room, our eyes met.

He was sitting at the counter,

notebook in front of him. He looked

vaguely familiar. I pointed to my portable

a Gateway Liberty™ small

and mouthed, "Gateway 2000." He smiled and gave me a

thumbs nputing, up. "My Gateway laces.

Liberty small notebook is way

cool," he said, pulling up a chair. "Powerful and light-weight, man. It's just what I need. I'm a poet now. But I used to have a band."



A band!

Gateway Solo notebooks are optimized for Microsoft® Windows® 95.



Memories of him in a silver jumpsuit and platform shoes came flooding back! He'd been plastered all over

I'm telling you. Gateway is just great!



my bedroom walls for years. "I'm telling you, Gateway

2000 really takes care of their customers. I can get

multimedia line have a telephone modular CD-ROM drive

technical support anytime. And Gateway's values are just out of this world. Hey, you wanna come over to my place and listen to some

vinvl?" I had a feeling my adventures were just beginning.

For more computing, more places call Gateway 2000 today.







0 - 5 5 5 - 2 0 8 7



S5-75XL

- 10.2" VGA Color Display
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- 256K L2 Pipelined Burst Cache
- 540MB Hard Drive
- Modular 2X CD-ROM Drive ■ 3.5" Modular Floppy Drive
- Integrated 16-Bit Sound with
- Stereo Speakers ■ 1MB Video RAM
- Lithium Ion Battery & AC Pack
- EZ Pad™ Pointing Device ■ 86-Kev MS Windows 95 Keyboard
- Parallel, Serial, Infrared, VGA & PS/2® Ports
- Built-In Mic, Headphone and Line-In Jacks and External Volume Control Dial ■ 11.8" x 8.8" x 2.0"
- Microsoft® Windows® 95^{ex} MS Works 95
- Carrying Case

S5-90XL BEST BUY

- 10.2" VGA Color Display
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- EZ Pad Pointing Device ■ 86-Key MS Windows 95 Keyboard
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- Edition¹ ■ Carrying Case

S5-90XL

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- 86-Kev MS Windows 95 Keyboard Parallel, Serial, Infrared. VGA &
- PS/2 Ports Built-In Mic. Headphone and Line-In Jacks and External
- Volume Control Dial ■ 11.8" x 8.8" x 2.0" ■ Microsoft Windows 95**
- MS Office 95, Professional Edition⁴ Carrying Case

SS-120XL

- 10.4" SVGA ColorDisplay
- 120MHz Intel Pentium Processor ■ 40MB RAM
- 256K L2 Pipelined Burst Cach:
- 1.2GB Hard Drive
- Modular 2X CD-ROM Drive ■ 3.5" Modular Floppy Drive
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- Day Planner®)

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Compton's Interactive, Microsoft Encarta 96, Grolier Multimedia

All the World on CD-ROM

When it comes to CD-ROM encyclopedias, three products own the market: Compton's Interactive Encyclopedia. Microsoft's Encarta 96 Encyclopedia, and Grolier Multimedia Encyclopedia. In their latest versions, all offer connections to online services so you can download undated material. And while all three references offer similar multimedia whizbang features, they're targeted at distinctly different audiences.

Completely Compton's Several features helped make Compton's Interactive Encyclopedia a winner of our annual MVP Award (see "The Most Valuable Products of the Year," December 1995, page 158). In the Editing Room, for example, you can piece together still photos, audio clips, videos, custom titles, and narration. The Idea Search tool scours the disc's 35,000 articles to find information related to a specific topic. Compton's updates, issued weekly, are available only through America Online.

Enter Encarta The new version of Microsoft's Encarta adds an improved Pinpointer search engine, making it easier to branch off to subtopics without sinking into a swamp of information overflow.

But in some instances, design has triumphed over function. When you display an image, for example, you have to click on a button to display the caption. Also, there's no standard Windows menu bar across the top. Clever touches include a Search Wizard, as well as InterActivities, a feature that lets you learn by experimentation. Encarta 96 provides links to Microsoft



Compton's, Microsoft, and Grolier put a library at your fingertips. Microsoft's Encarta 96 (above) has the most sophisticated content and frequent online updates.



Network and Microsoft's Web site, where you can download monthly updates.

Basic Reference The interface of Grolier's Multimedia Encyclopedia is comparatively drab. Its search tool doesn't gather related information from diverse topics, although it uses an outline approach for broad topics. Grolier's is the only one that doesn't display images or video simultaneously with text. It also lags in online updates, offering them only quarterly via CompuServe. On the plus side, it links 12,000 articles to CompuServe's special-interest groups online.

Younger kids and America Online subscribers will get the most from Compton's, while adults, high-school students, and Microsoft Network subscribers will want Encarta 96. Grolier's contains some innovative features, but it's the weakest overall. For more reviews of reference CD-ROMs, check out this month's CD-RON column on page 301. RON WHITE

FILEBOX

Compton's Interactive

Usability Technology ----Verdict

Best suited to young folks: innovative report tools. Online Undates: Weekly via America Online.

System Requirements: Windows 3.1 or later, sound card, CD-ROM drive.

S50 est, street price Compton's New Media (800) 261-6109. (619) 929-2500 Reader Service No. 691

Encarta 96 Usability Technology

**** **** Verdict An excellent reference tool

for all ages Online Updates: Monthly via Microsoft Network and the Web.

System Requirements: Windows 3.1 or later, sound card, CD-ROM drive.

\$55 est, street price Microsoft Home (800) 426-9400, (206) 882-8080 Reader Service No. 692

Grolier Multimedia

Usability Technology A Spartan encyclopedia. The

least compelling of the three. Online Undates: Quarterly via CompuServe.

System Requirements: Windows 3.1 or later, sound card, CD-ROM drive.

\$50 est, street price Grolier Electronic Publishing (800) 285-4534, (203) 797-3530 Reader Service No. 693

Guide to the Ratings:

***** Excellent

**** Good

*** Acceptable

** Poor

* Unacceptable

Personalized Accounting

Do vou fantasize about firing your accountant? With the newest edi-

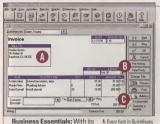
tion of OuickBooks Pro, there has never been a better reason. OuickBooks Pro 4.0 includes a simplified interface, more interactive help, and new customization options that make double-entry accounting easy enough for anyone to master.

Unless you already have another accounting package that fits you like a glove, OuickBooks Pro is the ideal bookkeeping and accounting package for small businesses.

Custom Fit QuickBooks Pro 4.0 starts simplifying your life during installation, letting you customize the program to fit your business needs. Startup Interview, borrowed from Intuit's TurboTax, walks you through a thorough but painless tailoring of your chart of accounts, menu choices, and help systems. Do you keep inventory? Do you have a payroll? Do you need to apply taxes to invoices? What types of taxes do you track? This comprehensive interview lets you decide what the program will do for you.

If you have a law firm, for example, inventory, project estimates, and sales tax will probably disappear from your menus, but not time tracking. On the other hand, the previously mentioned categories are indispensable for a construction company. You get only the program elements you need, and you can change the lineup at any time.

Accountants Inside Even help is customized for your business. If you're uncertain about a term or procedure, there's a Tell Me More button at every turn during



Business Essentials: With its superb interactive help and business-specific account analysis and customization, the new QuickBooks Pro remains the premier accounting package for small businesses.



B. Check a payment history for a client, or view the time and costs accumulated. C. Stumped? Advice acts as your personal consultant.

Pro's invoices is

customizable

Easy Setup: Startup Interview walks you through what could be a complicated process of setting up your accounts.

installation. Afterward, users can lean on the ever-present SoundAdvice button which, with a click, tells you everything you need to know about a particular invoice, chart, or list. It's just like having your own personal accountant.

OuickBooks Pro also contains 20 versions of the online documentation. The one you get will have in-depth advice tailored for your type of business-and in the parlance of vour industry.

Nowhere is customization more important than with invoices and purchase orders. QuickBooks Pro's invoices and forms are not only entirely customizable with many new

user-definable fields, they also provide the groundwork for later business analyses.

OuickBooks Pro also addresses tax forms and reports, and adds improved links to Intuit's TurboTax. Especially useful are the taxcode descriptions written specifically for small business. As ever, QuickBooks Pro gives you behind-the-scenes, double-entry accounting, while you deal with just checks, invoices, and other

Unfortunately, like most accounting packages, Quick-Books Pro isn't available in a network version, which is limiting if more than one person

familiar forms.

FILEBO)

OuickBooks Pro 4.0 Usahility

Technology Verdict Why hire a CPA? This may be all the accounting your small business needs.

Competition-Peachtree Accounting and BestWare's M.Y.O.B. packages both offer similar basic small-business accounting features, but they aren't as easy to use as QuickBooks Pro 4.0. Peachtree Accounting's Manager's Series analyzes and forecasts cash flow, and offers more tutorial material than previous versions, M.Y.O.B. is fully graphical and offers several time-saving data-entry tricks, but doesn't match QuickBooks Pro's ease of use

System Requirements: Windows 3.1 or later, 486 CPU. 4MB of RAM, 15MB of hard disk snace.

\$189 est, street price (B00) 624-8742 Reader Service No. 604

in your company balances the books. Peachtree Accounting is the only mainstream package with multiuser capabilities.

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package to get. MIKE HOGAN





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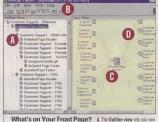
Building and maintaining your own World Wide Web site doesn't have to be a full-time occupation. A new generation of software makes creating Web pages easy. First off the mark is Vermeer Technologies' FrontPage-an HTML editor, Web server, and Webmanagement system in one.

The key to building a successful Web site is creating a lot of live links to other related documents and pages on the Web. But keeping track of all of these links and pages can be a hassle. FrontPage's main program, Explorer, helps you put your Web site in place, then gives you a continually updated graphical view of the site as you build it.

Explorer gives you three views-Outline, Link, and Summary, The Outline view displays your Web site's hierarchical organization and works very much like Windows 95's Explorer. The Link view provides a graphical representation of the various components of your Web site. The Summary view gives you details of the Web pages themselves, including filename, size, author, and URL address.

Mainly Management All your Web-management work can be done from Explorer, There's even an automatic to-do list creator that tracks HTML pages that have been linked but not actually written vet. The to-do list is also handy for tracking multiple authors who create or edit Web pages because it tells you who's working on which component. Prioritizing and assigning various tasks is yet another function of the to-do list.

FrontPage's Editor doesn't support the latest HTML tags, but it integrates well with



Publishing and managing your own Web site has never been easier than with FrontPage. The left pane shows an outline view of a Web site: the right pane displays the entire site in a graphical hierarchy of linked pages.



specific page. Web Robots:

a directory of pages

B. You can choose to show images, repeated links, and links within pages.

C. Arrows in the Link view show the direction of hyperlinks. D. Clicking on a plus sign shows the pages linked to that

FrontPage's WebBots are agentlike macros that automate common forms functions. This one e-mails you data results collected from your Web site.

Explorer. You can load Editor on its own, or just double-click on a Web page from Explorer. Editor simplifies the creation of hyperlinks, forms, and images, and-to the delight of anyone who creates image maps (pictures embedded with a live link that you can click on)-it contains all the image-mapping tools you need. Unfortunately, FrontPage's Editor doesn't support all of the HTML 3.0 standards yet, so you'll have to rely on another editor if you want to create tables, textures, frames, and other popular features that dress up Web sites.

FrontPage uses sophisticated agentlike macros, called WebBots, to automate common forms functions. For example, some WebBots will e-mail you data collected from your Web page or save the data to an HTML file. Others help you build registration procedures or create search forms. And there's even a WebBot that helps you produce discussion Web sites where you collect postings that can later be displayed in HTML pages, More than a dozen WebBots are included in the program.

FILEBOX

FrontPage Usability Technology

**** ale ale ale al

Verdict Hassle-free Web-page designer, manager, and server in one.

Competition: Nothing compares to FrontPage's complete bundle of authoring management, and server tools.

Features: Graphical Web management: WebBots, which assist in mundane tasks and may eliminate the need for programming; excellent integrated Web outlinerstandard HTML editor: and built-in Web server.

System Requirements: Windows 3.1. Windows for Workgroups 3.11. Windows NT 3.51. or Windows 95: 486 CPU: 8MB of RAM (16MB to use the personal Web server): 16MB of hard disk space: Winsock 1.1-compliant TCP/IP.

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Personal Web Server FrontPage also lets you set up your Web site on any PC that has its own Internet protocol address. The server software lets you specify permissions,

users, Web authors, and so on. FrontPage is a complete Web package-there's no better way to get started. You'll need a heftier HTML editor for advanced tasks like creating tables, but otherwise it's all here. If you need a professional Website publisher and manager, without the hassles of complex programming, FrontPage is a good fit. NEIL RANDALL



Windows 3.1x Windows® 95

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Hard Drive	630MB or 1GB	630MB or 1GB	630MB or 1GB	1GB
Cache Internal	16KB	16KB	16KB	16KB
Cache External	256KB (optional)	256KB (optional)	256KB	256KB
Architecture	PCI	PCI	TriFlex/PCI	TriFlex/PCI
Video Memory/Max.	1MB/2MB	1MB/2MB	1MB/2MB	1MB/2MB
Compaq 150 Color Monitor	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Diskette Drive	3.5" 1.44MB	3.5" 1.44MB	3.5" 1.44MB	3.5" 1.44MB
Expansion Slots (Total)	3	3	4	5
Drive Bays (Total)	3	3	4	5
Ports: Serial/Parallel	1/1 (ECP)	1/1 (ECP)	1/1 (ECP)	1/1 (ECP)
Security Features	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Processor Upgradable	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
101-Key Keyboard, Mouse	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Software Preinstalled (Choice of)	MS-Windows® 95 or MS-Windows 3.1	MS-Windows 95 or MS-Windows 3.1	MS-Windows 95 or MS-Windows 3,1	MS-Windows 95 or MS-Windows 3.1
Energy Star Compliant	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
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Get the Business-Information Edge

In poetry, ignorance is bliss; in business, it's death. The success of your business hinges on knowledge: You need news and information about your industry and your competitors Although many sources provide this information, finding data relevant to your company can be intimidating and time consuming, AT&T's Business Network and Reuters' Business Briefing are two new online information services that deliver just the information you need.

Live News AT&T's Business Network provides up-tothe-minute news from CNN, Dow Jones, Dun & Bradstreet Information Services, Standard & Poor's, and thousands of other sources, in a welldesigned, easy-to-digest graphical format. It's accessible at speeds of up to 28.8Kbps via modem, or directly through TCP/IP. Business Network also includes a copy of Netscape's Navigator with your subscription, and many news feeds include live links to sites on the World Wide Web.

Automated features include a personalized clipping service, updates, and a task list. Drag any content into your clippings folder, and it's automatically updated. For example, we created a folder that tracked Netscape Communications, the San Francisco 49ers, Softbank Corporation, technology news and updates. and Costa Rican weather. Once we added the custom folder to our task list. Business Network gave us automatic updates on each topic every time we logged on.

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month, Reuters' Business Briefing is costly. Despite its difficult setup, it includes the most comprehensive digitalclipping service available. You can search for newswire reports on almost any topic imaginable.

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Business Briefing Usability

Technology

Verdict

The spare interface masks a powerful business-information research tool.

Competition: Dow Jones News/Retrieval and Profound offer similar content and cost less, but Business Briefing has more than 2.000 sources.

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Business Network

Usability *****
Technology *****
Verdict ****
Hands-down the most flexible online business resource.

Competition: Online resources like Dow Jones News/Retrieval and Profound offer similar content, but Business Network's content is the most valuable, and offers links to Web sites

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employs powerful search tools—although they're often buried in the no-frills interface.

Setup is baffling, and it lacks the smart installation wixards and hand-holding that you get with Business Network. As for the connection speeds, the fastest local-access number available was a sluggish 9,600 bps, and there's no Telnet support. High speeds, however, aren't as essential as with the AT&T service because Business Briefing is almost entirely text-based.

Once we were connected, we tapped into Business Briefing's comprehensive library of information feeds and newswires from around the world. There are more than 2,000 sources, some of which are general interest, like Newsweek magazine. But

most, like Fibre Optic Product
News and the Russian-based
Izvestia, are highly specialized, to say the least.
Power Searches The real

Power Searches The real power of Business Briefing lies in its sophisticated search tools. You can sift through information according to country, industry, company, topic, source, or a date from within the previous year. For example, we searched for information about Netscape Communications, and limited

our search to issues of Computergram and Computer Weekly magazines from within the past week.

Considering its steep service charge of \$895 a month, only large corporations that require heavy-duty searching power should consider going with Reuters' Business Briefing. AT&T's Business Network, on the other hand, is perfect for small businesses, entrepreneurs, consultants, and managers who demand convenient, comprehensive business news and information. And at just \$39 a month, no other business resource comes close in price. RICH SCHWERIN



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SureTrak 1.5 directly comnetes with Microsoft's Project by offering improved usability and a few new tricks, while CA-SuperProject remains the best choice for highly complex projects, Although SureTrak and CA-SuperProject were designed for Windows 3.1, both ran fine under Windows 95 in our tests.

The Sure Bet Sure Trak 1.5 combines power with flexibility, giving you high-end scheduling and tracking features, including material-resource handling, multiproject coordinating, and e-mail updating. New to this version is support for OLE 2.0 and enhanced open database connectivity. Users of Microsoft's Mail and Lotus's cc:Mail can exchange updates with a SureTrak administrator-even if they don't use SureTrak.

You can immediately organize projects using the Activity Codes, which let you group tasks in any configuration you like. Create up to 20 custom Activity Codes for each project. A wizard helps you through the process.

SureTrak's Progress Spotlighter continues to be a unique reporting feature, highlighting the current date range in the Gantt chart and critical tasks in the task list. Because the whole idea is to organize, THE LANGE WE AND THE Close Hulp

Juggling Act: Don't make it harder than it has to be. Primavera's SureTrak Project Manager 1.5 helps you balance your budget and reconcile your resources

A. Activity codes let you organize projects and assign tasks using your own codes and categories B. Enter all the information about a particular task onto a single form. C. Tasks in the highlighted range are also highlighted in the task list. D. The Progress Spotlighter focuses on critical areas in the Gantt chart.



Growth Potential: CA-SuperProject 4.0 handles up to 16,000 tasks for a single project, coordinates multiple projects. and links tasks across projects.

view, and update information, this tool plays a key role in pinpointing pressing items.

The Pivot Table Wizard is a new reporting feature that cross-tabulates SureTrak data and stores it in an updatable pivot table in Excel. SureTrak also added wizards and online tutorials for complex tasks. If vou're a Microsoft Project user, you'll have no trouble getting up to speed with Sure-Trak. In fact, with SureTrak it takes less time to learn advanced features.

Super Planner While SureTrak can help you get smaller projects under control, enterprise-scale projects often

require more power. This is where Computer Associates CA-SuperProject 4.0 comes in.

CA-SuperProject handles up to 16,000 tasks in a single project, coordinates multiple projects, and links tasks across separate projects. Tracking features include PERT probability analysis, hammock tasks, and flexibleovertime modeling.

CA-SuperProject has some new features such as bubblestyle help on toolbars and in individual fields, 99 levels of undo, and various interface improvements. These additions certainly help, but CA-SuperProject remains a difficult

FILEBOX

CA-SuperProject 4.0 Usability Technology Verdict Multiproject power and links, but no connections to

e-mail or scheduling. System Requirements: Windows 3.1 or later, 386 CPU. AMR of RAM (8MR recommended).

\$149 competitive upgrade (800) 225-5224, (516) 342-5224

SureTrak Project Manager 1.5

Usability Technology Verdict A capable, easy-to-use project manager

System Requirements: Windows 3.1 or later, 386 CPU. 4MB of RAM, 8MB of hard disk space.

\$99 upgrade Reader Service No. 699

program to master-expect to spend some time reading the manual. What's more, it doesn't let you send and receive status updates via e-mail, nor does it provide scheduling support for networks.

For project-management simplicity, Microsoft's Project is still the clear usability leader. But SureTrak Project Manager 1.5 comes close; current Sure-Trak users will want the upgrade. For larger-scale projects, CA-SuperProject is one of the most powerful managers around-too bad it lacks the workgroup connectivity found in SureTrak and Microsoft's Project. GEORGE HACKMAN

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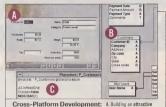
Cross-platform power-that's what users of ACI's 4th Dimension, the premier developer's database for Apple's Macintosh, have been craving for a long time. With the release of 4th Dimension 3.5 for Windows, they finally get it.

4th Dimension helps businesses struggling with two platform-specific databases. While it sorely lacks some basic database tools like Structured Ouery Language (SQL) and comprehensive object-oriented programming, 4th Dimension is the best choice for developing databases and applications for both Windows and Macintosh operating systems.

Platform Jumping Like its Macintosh sibling, 4th Dimension for Windows offers a graphical forms editor, a fullfeatured Pascal-like programming language, multitasking capabilities, and an integrated database engine.

Developers can use 4th Dimension to create customized databases and applications, but because of its text-only programming interface, the software isn't as easy to use as Borland's Delphi, Some elements, however, are graphical. For example, the Structure Editor makes creating and relating tables as easy as point. click, and drag. The Layout Editor, which is used to create data-entry forms, dialog boxes, and reports, is also graphically based-but it's not very fluid and will probably try your patience.

Speak My Language The programming language is extremely flexible and gives you complete control over an application's interface and data, Nevertheless, 4th Dimension could be easier to use.



4th Dimension, the longtime leader in the Macintosh arena. W de m pl

thile it lacks some data evelopment features, i just for creating cross- atform applications.	abase Structure Edit	tor. ed progi
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3	Products	Executing	18	
4	Taxes	Waiting Event	0e	
5	SDashboard	Waiting Event	10	ı
6	Design process	Executing	117a	4

Job Juggler: 4th Dimension's multiple-process architecture lets applications handle a variety of tasks simultaneously, such as compiling and entering data.

Unfortunately, the skills you acquired in other Windows programming environments don't apply to 4th Dimension. The power, productivity, and structure of object-oriented programming are lost, and the language bears no resemblance to the Visual Basic language. Because 4th Dimension doesn't use the traditional SQL programming language, experienced programmers will have to unlearn a lot of SOL basics to make the most of 4th Dimension's database engine.

Because of its tough learning curve, it's unlikely that 4th Dimension will lure many people from their current programs of choice. But it does have a few bright spots. 4th Dimension's multiple-process architecture lets you create multitasking applications. Imagine compiling a report in one window, faxing a bid in another, and entering inventory in a thirdall at the same time. You can do this with 4th Dimension, And how about a compiler that creates machine-language executable files for either Windows or Macintosh? It will cost you another \$1,000 and it's considerably less sophisticated than the compiler in Microsoft's C++, but it works.

interface for your database

ramming

B. Define your database

is simple.

Speed Bump If you want a new database because sorts take too long in Microsoft's Visual FoxPro, keep looking. 4th Dimension is no speed demon.

FILEBOX

Windows tools

4th Dimension 3.5 for Windows Usability Technology Verdict Serious cross-platform database but it trails mature

Competition: For creating database applications Borland's Delphi offers a rich object-oriented programming environment SQL and machine-language compilation. Microsoft's Visual FoxPro offers greater object orientation, and an integrated data engine that outpaces 4th Dimension's. Neither competitor, however, provides cross-platform

development features. System Requirements: Windows 3.1. Windows 95, or Windows NT: 386 CPU or faster: 8MB of RAM for Windows 3.1 and Windows 95: 16MB RAM for Windows NT.

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For functions like multiple-field sorting and table joining, it's downright poky. Performance is also an issue with its clientserver implementation. While 4th Dimension-based databases perform acceptably for workgroups of 20 to 50, 4th Dimension doesn't pose much of a threat to high-end products like Oracle's SOL Server.

Database developers who want to create stand-alone and workgroup applications for Macintosh and Windows clients will find 4th Dimension 3.5 for Windows a practical and long-awaited choice. But if you don't have any crossplatform needs, there's little reason to switch from your current database. J.W. DAVIS

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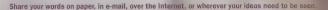
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learns to recognize both the idiosyncratic mistakes you have a tendency to make, and the peculiar names, abbreviations, and spellings you don't want it to correct. If you override a correction, it adds the word or phrase to its exceptions list and never makes that change again. It has even learned to speak your language. If you have a question, you ask the Answer Wizard in plain English. "How do'l make this into two columns?" It gives you step-by-step instructions. You stop working only long enough to type in your question.







With WordMail's connection to the Microsoft Exchange Inbox in Windows® 95, you can write e-mail messages using the many formatting options of Microsoft Word to communicate more clearly, more convincingly. Use the Highlighter to emphasize key information. Make your case in ways you

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to guide your project down a clear path

Introducing new Microsoft Project for Windows 95.

Now you can manage projects more simply, more smoothly, by communicating project information as it occurs. With new Microsoft* Project you can convey project status quickly and effectively so your boss, customers, and coworkers are always in the loop. From sharing task deadlines and responsibilities, to letting people know about changes and the impact they'll have on the deadline, you have the tools to organize your projects into manageable steps and keep them moving in the right direction. New Microsoft Project unlocks the doors of communication and gives you the power to navigate the most efficient route to a successful end product.



Graphical views let teammates visualize where the project is going.

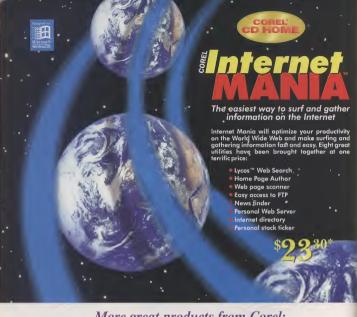
With Microsoft Project you can display project data in ways that everyone can understand. Great-looking Gantt Charts integrate text, timelines and graphical bars so everyone can see start and finish dates, inter-

dependencies and task assignments. Throughout your project, you can also use a Monthly Calendar report to share your plan in a format that's clear and easy to read. And since Project shares many of the same key commands with other Office applications, it will be easy to create schedules and reports. But if at any time you need help, type in a question and the Answer Wizard gives you the information you need. Microsoft Project helps you illustrate every phase of your project so you and your team keep your goals in sight.









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NETWORKING: CD-QuickShare · C/S Solution Advisor

SoftArc FirstClass 3.0

Groupware on a Shoestring

The grand vision of, work-group communications, in which all employees share information and work collaboratively, often gets lost in a taragle of voice mail and dreaded interoffice memos. If you're looking for a better way for your team to connect—and you need more than a BBS but less than Lotus Notes—Soft-Arc's FirstClass 3.0 provides an intelligent and uncluttered way to manage workgroup communications.

FirstClass delivers e-mail, group conferencing, basic forms, and database access to teammates across the office or across the country. Remote colleagues can connect via modem, LAN, WAN, or TCP/IP.

FirstClass Mail E-mail is FirstClass Mail E-mail is FirstClass's central component. Although it looks simple, it holds many powerful messaging features that let you set sensitivity and priority; levels; attach files and track, answer, and forward messages. First-Class also provides a personal profile for each user and lets you decide how much information to include—anything from your mailing address to photographs.

Initiating and following electronic team discussions is easy using the conferencing features, which include message threading and sorting by subject. You can copy conferences and content onto other FirstClass servers and platforms via modem, LAN, WAN, or TCP/IP. This is especially helpful if you need to share information and collaborate with users at multiple sites and indifferent environments.



workgroup communications? SoftArc's FirstClass 3.0 provides e-mail, database access, group conferencing, and forms processing over LAN, WAN, TCP/IP, and even analog phone connections.



Special Delivery: FirstClass's e-mail supports file attachments, which are shown as graphical page icons in your in-box or conference thread.

connect with other team

R Use the New Form

of custom forms.

also available.

editor to create a variety

C. FirstClass's central

component is e-mail.

Multiple in-boxes are

members.

Using the program's Designer tool, you can easily build forms for phone messages, purchase orders, and other structured messages. If you have a fax gateway, you can create fax forms, cover pages, and letterhead. First Class also lets you search Structured Query Language (SQL) databases using custom-built forms.

The First Class server runs on Microsoft's Windows NT 3.51, but any First Class client can communicate with the server using any connection method.

FirstClass's full-featured remote-client software looks and performs exactly like the LAN client and is free to distribute if you use FirstClass as your online service. Try it out by downloading a free client from PC Computing Online (see instructions on page 36).

Impartial Connections
Despite its strengths, FirstClass lacks useful search tools.
And while you can attach files,
it would be nicer to embed
them using OLE 2.0, thereby
keeping shared information

FILEBOX

FirstClass 3.0
Usability ***
Technology ***
Verdict ****
Powerful, affordable group-

communication tools.

Competition: Although FirstClass can't match actus Notes
for workflow management,
Notes costs in times more and
requires a declicated staff to
administer and program it.
Other group-communication
competition sinclude touts's
coc.Mail, Microsoft's Exchange
and Mail, and Notes
developments resulting from
Netscape's acquisistion of
Collabors Share.

System Requirements: Client: Windows 3.1 or later, 486 CPU, 4MB of RAM, 2MB of hard disk space. Server: Windows NT 3.51, 486 CPU, 16MB of RAM, 80MB of free hard disk space.

Free Test Drive: Download a client version of FirstClass from PC Computing Online (see page 36 for details).

\$1,485 est. street price for a server and ten clients; \$995 for TCP/IP; \$495 per MAPI gateway \$600,763-8272, (905) 415-7000 Reader Service No. 707

kinetic. Also, FirstClass uses a 16-bit client. So while First-Class works under Windows 95, it doesn't support long filenames or 32-bit performance.

FirstClass is a bargain for its e-mail strengths alone. Powerful communications tools make it even better. If your small workgroup needs to connect, communicate, and collaborate—but you don't need the sophisticated features or expense of Lotus Notes—check out SoftArc's FirstClass 30, RICH SCHWERIN.

Software-Only CD-ROM Sharing

What do you do if you have just one copy of that missioncritical marketing CD-ROM and five people who need to access it daily? You could install an expensive CD-ROM server, or you can get Stac's \$499 CD-OuickShare.

CD-QuickShare copies, compresses, and stores CD-ROM titles onto a networked hard drive so you can easily share CDs over a network. The program uses Stac's LZS file-compression technology, letting you build a library of CD-ROMs without bogging down your hard drive. A feature called CD-Administrator lets you control file access and administration rights for adding, moving, deleting, and updating CD-ROM titles. The CD-Selector software lets you



networked users load the same CD-ROM title.

and your coworkers simultaneously access the CD-ROMs. CD-OuickShare supports five concurrent users and five CD-ROM titles, but you can purchase additional user and CD licenses, Daisy-chained SCSI drives and dedicated FILEBOX

CD-QuickShare Usability Technology

Verdict A smart way to share CO-ROMs over a network.

Platforms Supported: Artisoft's LANtastic: Novell's Personal NetWare, NetWare 3.x. and NetWare 4.x: Microsoft's Windows for Workgroups. Windows NT, and Windows 95: Banyan's VINES.

\$499 est, street price for five users and five discs: \$134 per additional ten-user or ten-disc license (800) 522-7822, (619) 794-4300 Reader Service No. 708

network CD-ROM servers will do the job-but CD-OuickShare is a faster, cheaper alternative. RICH SCHWERIN

Interpose C/S Solution Advisor

Deciding when

Forecast Your Net Upgrade Costs

and how to up-SNEAK grade the army of networked machines in your businesssystems, servers, printers, and storage devices-isn't easy, and poor decisions can cost you both time and money. Interpose's C/S Solution Advisor can help by analyzing the components connected to a NetWare network, and by forecasting upgrade expenses.

Install C/S Solution Advisor on any NetWare system, and it searches the entire network to produce a detailed list of the memory, storage space, and processor speeds of all attached servers and desktop systems. It can even examine hard drives to determine how old data is and



Advisor to predict the cost of major hardware upgrades for your network.

whether duplicate files exist. Once you've taken inven-

tory, C/S Solution Advisor automatically forecasts the costs of up to three years of upgrades. The default settings for its predictions are taken from industry averages. For instance, if a workstation currently needs 1GB of storage, C/S Solution Advisor assumes it'll need 3.6GB in two years.

Depending on your office's server and backup system, that estimate could be way off the mark. To produce more reasonable forecasts. vou can enter vour own data or choose from the more than 100 profile settings.

Keep in mind, however, that C/S Solution Advisor doesn't cover everything. The cost of software upgrades, for example, isn't estimated, although you can manually enter these expenses into the program.

Whether you're upgrading a small network of 5 or a large network of 500, C/S Solution Advisor is a great way to forecast costs.

FILEBOX

C/S Solution

Advisor Usability Technology Verdict

Effectively estimates upgrade costs, giving you the biggest return on investment.

Competition: Both Intel's LANDesk and HP's OpenView offer far superior analysis and reporting tools for networks. servers, and clients, but neither includes financial forecasting.

System Requirements: Windows 3.1 or later, NetWare 3.0 or later, 386 CPU, 8MB of RAM, 4MB of hard disk space.

(407) 260-5551 Reader Service No. 700

Guide to the Ratings:

**** Excellent

**** Good

*** Acceptable

**Poor

* Unacceptable



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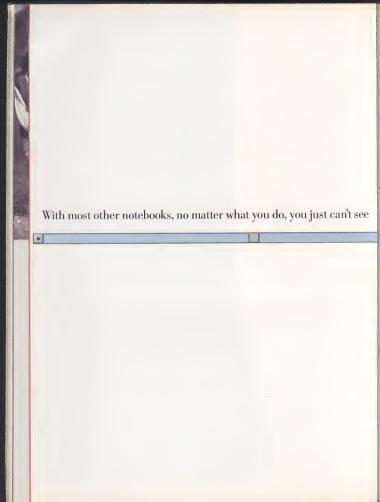
Online Superguide

Battle of the titans: Online services vs. the Web

oes your online service deliver? The four giants—America Online, CompuServe, Microsoft Network, and Prodigy—are all vying to be your single online solution. But which one offers the best e-mail, news, and other features? And, more important, do you even need a commercial service, or should you get a direct connection to the Web?

To find out how all the online services stack up, we compared the big four, as well as *PC Computing*'s ultimate Web connection consisting of Netscape's Navigator 2.0 and a local Internet service provider. We sought the best overall solution—in usability and features—across five core business needs: e-mail, downloading files, chat, message boards, and content. Our exhaustive lab testing reached two major conclusions: You don't lose any significant features by going straight to the Web, but the

BY ROSS SCOTT RUBI







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well-defined structure of the commercial services makes it easier to accomplish basic tasks such as finding files.

To help you choose the right service for your needs, we've compiled five tables that show how to perform specific tasks on the different services, and highlight the unique aspects of each (starting on page 126). Finally, for those of you eager to dive into the Web, we present the ultimate Web setup on page 136.

E-mail The promise of electronic communication has motivated millions of people to subscribe to online services and get e-mail addresses. After an early lead in e-mail, CompuServe has fallen behind rival America Online. Now America Online can process Multipurpose Internet Mail Extensions (MIME) file enclosures to and from the Internet, and has removed the 32K message limit that once hampered it, although it supports only one enclosure per message. In contrast, CompuServe still doesn't support true enclosures, even for mail sent within the service. While CompuServe's WinCIM 2.0 lets you attach binary files to messages, this is merely a shortcut for creating two messages. Microsoft Network, on the other hand, encodes binary attachments on the fly and lets you attach multiple files.

America Online, CompuServe, and Prodigy use integrated mail modules, and Microsoft Network uses a separate program for e-mail (Microsoft's Exchange client). Prodigy and CompuServe don't let you multinsk when you read or send mail (at least via WinCIM 2.8), but America Online and Microsoft Network do. Because Exchange is built for local-area network mail retrieval, Microsoft Network's mail system has extensive filtering options, routing rules, and—like CompuServe—personal folders, which help you perform tasks such as automatically forwarding messages and organizing mail. Microsoft Network e-mail also supports rich text format.

As long as your Internet service provider has a Post Office Protocol server, Netscape's Navigator 2.0 supports MIME e-mail, but it takes the concept beyond



Black Book: The e-mail component of Netscape's Navigator Gold 2.0 makes it easy to create group addresses and move addresses among multiple groups.



Fast Finder: WinCIM 2.0 brings together CompuServe's multiple file finders, letting you quickly track down shareware files scattered among PC-related forums.

mere file enclosures. It can display multimedia content as well as HTML documents within its mail window. Navigator's address book also has the smoothest interface, letting you easily move users among groups. The overalle-mail winner, however, is Microsoft Network, thanks to its sophisticated rules functions.

Downloading Files A big draw of online services has traditionally been their vast libraries of freeware and shareware. CompuServe boasts more than 200,000 files across its PC and Windows forums. WinCDM 20 consolidates the service's multiple file finders, the PLD letting you search for files on up to three keywords. America Online's file finder lets you pinpoint file attegories, but isn't as precise as CompuServe when it comes to searching by date. Both services also let you yiew IPEG and GIF images as the var ed ownloaded.

Microsoft Network and Prodigy have weaker file libraries. Although Prodigy went into service before America Online, it did not add file downloading until much later. To make up for lost time, Prodigy has added ready-made file libraries from sources such as Ziff-Davis Interactive and Bits and Bytes, but the whole collection is a small fraction of what you'll find on CompuServe or America Online. Microsoft Network's file libraries are still too new to assess; vou'll find few files available for download.

All four services let you queue files for batch downloading, although CompuServe is limited to queuing files in the same forum, or general content area. With America Online and Microsoft Network, you can smoothly pause and resume downloads, even those you started earlier.

Navigator gives you access to millions of files scattered across thousands of FTD sites, but scattered is the operative word. If you know how to use the Internet's Archie utility, you can scan FTP sites for specific words in filenames or short descriptions, but this method isn't as accurate or useful as keyword searches. Some Web sites now include keyword databases for Internet files, such as the Virtual Software Library (http://www.cnet.com/Resources/Download/indexhtml). But they are not as complete or easy to find as the online service's built-in functions. Files transferred in FTP are also often encoded, and require the extra

Online Services: Chat and Message Boards

step of decoding to get into Windows-usable form.

Overall, CompuServe's file library is the easiest to

access and the most complete.

Chat Hold conversations with other members all over the country or all over the world in chat rooms using real-time, one-to-one or one-to-many communication. The services all present a similar interface: You type in a box at the bottom of a scrolling window that contains others' comments, and then hit the Return key to add your comments to the discussion. All services offer multiple public rooms on topics ranging from singles to stocks, and all but Microsoft Network have private rooms where virtually anything goes. Prodigy and America Online have strict standards for their public rooms; in fact, Prodigy's client includes an Alert button that you can use to quickly send a complaint to a sysop if someone makes an offensive or inappropriate comment. Only Microsoft Network lets you participate in two or more chats simultaneously.

Once a pioneer, CompuServe's CB Simulator now shows its age. Its dated metaphor lets you tune into chat channels, but there's no way to see a list of all the topics. When you select a band, it drops you into a tracking window that displays numbered channels and buttons like Tune and Monitor. It works, but CB Simulator is long overdue for an update.

With the addition of Netscape's optional Chat, which supports the Internet Relay Chat (IRC) standard, Navigator offers the best chat functions. Netscape Chat includes all the chat features found on online



Group Gab: In addition to basic functions, Prodigy's Chat offers an Instant Message feature that lets you send a quick, private note to only one member in the current forum.

REPORT CARD

ONLINE SERVICE PRODUCTIVITY IN KEY AREAS



The sudden popularity of the World Wide Web has galvanized online services to expand the features and improve the usability of their client software. We investigated how well each service—plus a Netscape's Navigator—World Wide Web combination—handles sending e-mail, downloading files, participating in chat sessions, and reading and posting forum messages. We also compared the overall content of each. In general, we found it a bit easier to move around with online services than Navigator 2.0 on the Web, but the Web's content is far richer.

E-mail

America Online	CompuServe	Microsoft Network	Prodigy	Navigator/ Web
/		V		V

Put tri Writing: While America Online, Microsoft Network, and Netscape's Navigator handle Internet e-mail attachments with aplomb, Microsoft Network shines, thanks to easy multimedia e-mail within the service. CompuServe doesn't support real attachments. Prodigy's and CompuServe's separate e-mail packages make it hard to send messages with content from the service.

Downloading Files

		-		
America Online	CompuServe	Microsoft Network	Prodigy	Navigator/ Web
V	V			

Search and Deliver on Demand: Downloading files is easy on all four commercial services, but not) America Online and CompuServe have well-developed file libraries and excellent search tools. Prodigy's file libraries are small, and Microsoft Network's are still growing. Navigator offers access to the largest collection via FTP, but no easy way to track down specific files.

services, and adds support for HTML and URLs, so all the attendees in your chat can simultaneously view a Web page for which you provide the address.

Message Boards CompuServe and Microsoft Network are the best hosts for long-running debates. Both support message threading, which makes it easy to track replies, although Microsoft Network doesn't inform you if replies have been made to your postings, as CompuServe does. CompuServe provides the best message-search tools, including by subject and by author. However, Microsoft Network's message interface, which parallels Windows 95's Explorer list views, is more up-to-date and complete. Microsoft Network is also the only service that allows graphics, sounds, and other files to be laued in message via OLE.

Navigator currently relies on Usenet for its main message boards, though it can be used with any message server featuring a Web front end, such as Attachmate's OpenMind. Navigator supports threading and presents a flexible, three-paned interface similar to that of Netscape's Collabra Share groupware package and Cutus's Notes 4.0. Usenet threads tend to break up, though, and the signal-to-noise ratio in the discussion groups is generally higher than in the online services.

America Online offers a limited form of threading on



Tracking Threads: Microsoft Network's message boards support an informative view for following conversation threads, similar to that in Windows 95's Explorer.

some boards, but it's not as complete as CompuServe's or Microsoft Network's threading. Plus, America Online lacks a topic-search function, although you can find all new messages in a folder posted since a given date. No service offers full-text searching, standard in LAN packages like Lotus's Notes and Netscape's Collabar Share. CompuServed #Produgilet you read messages offline without changing you, but CompuServed stools are more comprehensive. Unfortunately, they

Chat

America Online	CompuServe	Microsoft Network	Prodigy	Navigator/ Web
V		V	V	V

Private Powwow or Public Forum? Microsoft Network is the only service that lets you participate in two chat rooms simultaneously, but Prodigy and America Online offer private rooms, which Microsoft Network lacks. Navigator's optional Chat add-in supports all the features of online services, plus the ability to send graphics during a chat. CompuServe's CB Simulator needs undating.

Message Boards

	-			
America		Microsoft		Navigator/
Online	CompuServe	Network	Prodigy	Web
		.1		
	V	V		V

Who Said So—And When? CompuServe, Microsoft Network, and Navigator let you track replies via threads. Navigator provides the best interface, but CompuServe has better searching options and content. America Online does not offer threading in every area. Microsoft Network supports OLE-enabled messages, while Prodicy's archice system has poor Windows support.

Content

America Online	CompuServe	Microsoft Network	Prodigy	Navigator/ Web
V	V			V

News You Can Use: Of the online services, America Online and Microsoft Network do the best, job of packaging their information, but Microsoft Network is still playing catch-up. CompuServe offers several unique features but isn't very flashy, Much of Prodigy's content looks very dated. With Netscape's Navigator, you have direct access to the enormously frich World Wide Web.

aren't a part of WinCIM 2.0—you'll need to use an additional offline reader application such as Compu-Serve's OzCIS, WinNav, CISNav, or TapCIS.

The interfaces in Prodigy's message boards are still stuck in the early '80s. While Microsoft Network lets you do sophisticated tasks such as drag and drop files and OLE objects into messages, Prodigy doesn't even understand double-elicking to select a word. The only realistic way to post messages is to import the text from an external source.

Content Subscribers user to judge online services' content in terms of online forums, but now brand names have become more important. All commercial online services have newswires, including AP, UPI, and Reuters. Only America Online hosts the New York Times, however, and only CompuServe features Computer Library and IQuest databases for retrieving information on companies and products. NBC, which was courted away from America Online, is one of Microsoft Network's most popular features. Prodigy's new Web areas correspond to those of other services, but many of its links lie outside the service and are reachable from any online venue. And while Compu-Serve has added some jazzy services, such as online versions of Rolling Stone and People Magazine, the service's content strength remains in its user-sponsored forums. Not surprisingly, the six-month-old Microsoft Network lags in content behind its older rivals.

The content available to users of Netscape's Navigator 2.0 is, of course, the entire World Wide Web, which ranges from the relevant to the irreverent, including sites for virtually everything you'll find on



All Dressed Up: America Online includes colorful backgrounds and graphics, but all of this window dressing takes longer to download.

an online service and more. The Web continues to attract new content faster than any online service, and Navigator continues to be the browser for which most sites are designed. If content matters, it's the way to go.

Signing Off If you're looking for more structured content and clearly defined functions, commercial online services and their accompanying client applications offer the easiest path online. The more ambitious, however, will find that the Navigator-Internet combination offers all the features of the online services and more—you just have to work a bit harder to get what you're after. And as more companies work to address the Web's limitations, an Internet connection may soon be all you need.

Comparing Online Services

Monthly Rates	Connection Types	Internet Access	Kilacille Milacille	Omino S	Unique Features	Verdict
5-hour plan: \$9.95; \$2.95/add'l hour.	28.8Kbps modem or TCP/IP	FTP, Usenet, WAIS, Web	Yes	E-mail, newsgroup reading	Animation	**** Good content, Net connectivity and intuitive interface.
Vary depending on Internet service provider.	28.8Kbps modem, ISDN, or TCP/IP	FTP, Telnet Usenet, WAIS, Web	Yes	E-mail	Java apps, VRML 3-D support	* * * * Help and online applications expand feature set.
5-hour plan: \$9.95*; \$2.95/ add'l hour. 20-hour plan: \$24.95; \$1.95/add'l hour.	28.8Kbps modem or TCP/IP	FTP, Telnet, Usenet, Web	No	E-mail, - message boards	White Pages, WorldsAway	* * * Strong message boards and technical content.
3-hour plan: \$4.95; \$2.50/ add'l hour. 20-hour plan: \$19.95; \$2.00/add'l hour.	28.8Kbps modem	Usenet, Web	Yes	E-mail	OLE, Shortcuts	* * * OLE support and a nice interface, but little content.
5-hour plan: \$9.95*; \$2.95/ add'l hour. 30-hour plan: \$29.95; \$2.95/add'l hour.	14.4Kbps or 28.8Kbps modem	Usenet, Web	No COST EXTRA	E-mail, message boards	Web-based content	* * A service in flux, but shows signs of promise.
	5-hour plan: 58:95; \$2.96/add1 hour. Vary depending on Internet service provider. 5-hour plan: \$8.85*;\$2.95\/ add1 hour. 20-hour plan: \$2.485;\$1.958/add1 hour. 3-hour plan: \$4.95;\$2.50\/ add1 hour. 20-hour plan: \$1.985;\$2.00/add1 hour. 5-hour plan: \$9.85*;\$2.95\/ add1 hour. 30-hour plan: \$2.985;\$2.95/add1 hour.	Monthly Rates 5-hour plans \$9.95; 29.96/add1 hour. Vay depending on Internet service provider. modem, SDN, or TCP/IP 5-hour plans \$9.95;52.96/add1 hour. 20-hour plans; 24.95;51.96/add1 hour. 20-hour plans; 29.95;52.09/add1 hour. 30-hour plans; 59.95;52.09/add1 hour. 30-hour plans; 59.95;52.09/add1 hour. 30-hour plans; 59.29.95;52.96/add1 hour. 30-hour plans; 59.29.95;52.96/add1 hour. 30-hour plans; 52.29.95;52.96/add1 hour. 30-hour plans; 52.29.95;52.96/add1 hour. 30-hour plans; 52.29.95;52.96/add1 hour. 30-hour plans; 59.29.95;52.96/add1 hour. 30-hour plans; 5	Monthly Rates Types Access	5-hour plant \$4.98; 28.8Kbps modem or TCP/IP FTP, Usenet, WAIS, Web or TCP/IP Vary depending on Internet service provider. 28.8Kbps modem, ISON, Usenet, Or TCP/IP FTP, Teinet Yes was to the WAIS, Web or TCP/IP 5-hour plant; \$4.95; \$2.56/2 add Thour, 28-hour plant; \$4.95; \$2.56/4 hour, p	5-hour plan: \$885: \$2.85/add'1 hour. Z8.8Kbps modern or CPD/P FIP, Usenet, WAIS, Web Yes E-mail, newsgroup reading Vary depending on Internet service provider. or CPD/P Z8.8Kbps or CPD/P FIP, Telnet, WAIS, Web Yes E-mail 5-hour plan: \$24.85; \$18.96 fd Hour. 23-hour plan: \$21.895; \$2.904 fd Hour. \$3-hour plan: \$18.95; \$2.904 fd Hour. \$3-hour plan: \$18.95; \$2.904 fd Hour. \$4.905 ft Hour plan: \$18.95; \$2.904 ft Hour. \$4.905 ft Hour plan: \$2.905 ft Hour plan: \$2.905 ft Hour plan: \$3.905 ft Hour plan: \$3.905 ft Hour plan: \$4.905 ft Hour plan: \$4.905 ft Hour plan: \$5.905 ft Hour plan: \$4.905 ft Hour plan: \$5.905 ft H	5-hour plant \$9.95; \$2.86/addT hour. 28.86kps modern or TCP/IP FTP, Usenet, WAS, Web Yes E-mail, newagroup reading Animation newagroup reading Vary depending on internet service provider. 28.86kps modern, ISDN, or TCP/IP FTP, Teinet WAS, Web Yes E-mail Jine apps. 5-hour plant \$9.95; \$2.95/ addT hour 20-hour plants \$24.95; \$1.85/addT hour. 28.86kps or TCP/IP FTP, Teinet, Usenet, Web E-mail White Papes, message boards 5-hour plants \$9.5; \$2.95/ or TCP/IP 28.86kps modern Usenet, Web Yes E-mail OLE, Shortcuts 5-hour plants \$9.5; \$2.95/ old fillour, 39hour plants 44.46kps message Usenet, Web No E-mail Web-based message



able to receive faxes or make phone calls while staving online at 64,000 bps.

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. Supports Multilink-PPP · Designed for Windows 95 · Plug-and-Play ISA

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Instant Access

It's evolving, It's unorganized. Still, surfing the Web with Netscape's Navigator 20, when paired with endless pricing and access options, provides the best online experience for the buck. Navigator has pulled ahead of online services with features such as support for down-loadable online applications via Sun Microsystems', Java, and a budding industry of vendors is working to address the Web's deficiencies. For those who feel the organization and support of an online service is worth the price, we recommend America Online as the best choice for most people. For texhnical users and down-load fans, Computerve's forums still hold an odge.

With most ofiline services priced comparably, these days (although some offer volume-usage plans), content and presentation play as strong a role as usability. America Online and Microsoft Network have beginn to look more like CD-ROMs than the BBSs of yore. In contrast, even WinCIM 2.0 preserves CompuServe's conservative, spartan look, while Prodigy's designers should have new options open to them with the company's recent licensing of Netscape's Navigator. Be

aware, however, that eye candy can fatten your online bill. While America Online takes you into a free area for serious attacks of new art downloads, the wait can be maddening. In contrast, Microsoft Network brings in graphics gradually, freeing you to move on in a very Web-like fashion.

If you're looking for technical support, stick with an online service. America Online has live online tech support 24 hours a day, and both Prodigy and Compuserve offer 24-hour phone support. There are also major navigation differences: Microsoft Network's keyword system is still ill-defined, while Prodigy's can flag down close marches even if you don't get the initial keyword right. America Online can decipher URLs in its keyword entry dialog and launch is Web browser. Ultimately, though, if the momentum for the Web continues at its present pace, online services may soon become glorified on-ramps to the Internet.

ROSS SCOTT RUBIN has written and edited several books about online services.







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America Online

newspaper classified section

in the country,

Claiming the largest U.S. membership of any online service (3 million and counting). America Online provides high-speed access to its many online areas and forums, all of which are graphically appealing. Unfortunately, the biggest frustration is waiting for graphics to download every time you enter a new area.

Basic Tasks	How They're Done	What's Unique
Add name to address book.	Choose Edit Address Book from Mail menu and click on Create. Type in name and press Tab. Type e-mail address.	Procedure for creating addresses and groups is the same.
Queue a file for downloading.	Enter file library. Select file. Click on Download Later.	Can automate waiting downloads with the Flash Sessions feature.
Read replies to a message.	Open a listing of messages. Double-click on a message. Keep pressing forward arrow to look for subject preceded by Re:.	A nonthreaded interface is easier for beginners, but a hindrance to advanced users.
Save a chat transcript.	Choose Logging from File menu. Enter name for log file. Click on Open for Chat log. Keyword: CHAT. Click on Close in Log window.	Moves you into a similar chat room if one you're trying to access is full.
Look up entry in encyclopedia.	Keyword: COMPTON'S ENCYCLOPEDIA Click on Search All Text. Type term and hit return. Double-click on an item in list.	The Compton's area is filled with supplemental materials such as tips on researching.
Other Tasks		
Set up a Web page.	Keyword: MYHOMEPAGE. Click on Create/Edit My Home Page. Click on Create.	Creates a basic home page in a few easy steps.
View online animation.	Keyword: HECKLERS. Look at animated mouth.	Simple animations stand out without increasing download time significantly.
Take a swing at "Today's Pitch" trivia game.	Keyword: FOLLYWOOD. Click on Today's Pitch. Read the question and click on Take a Swing. Enter a number and click on Swing.	Follywood provides a humorous look at Hollywood. The contest regularly awards free time online.
Block Instant Messages.	Keyword: PARENTAL CONTROLS. Click on Chat controls. Click on Block Instant Message.	Primary account holder can restrict access to chat and newsgroups.
Search New	Keyword: TIMESCLASSIFIED.	Free access to the largest



primary screen-name holder allow or restrict privileges for other screen names.



Moving Pictures: The home-page building area contains a bit of animation in which the dog (top right) briefly raises his sunglasses.



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classifieds.

· Click on Help Wanted.

. Click on a Jobs letter category.

. Enter checkboxes and keyword.

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THE INTERNET



America Online

Claiming the largest U.S. membership of any online service (3 million and counting). America Online provides high-speed access to its many online areas and forums, all of which are graphically appealing. Unfortunately, the biggest frustration is waiting for graphics to download every time you enter a new area.

Basic Tasks	How They're Done	What's Unique	
Add name to address book.	Choose Edit Address Book from Mail menu and click on Create. Type in name and press Tab. Type e-mail address.	Procedure for creating addresses and groups is the same.	Parental Controls Wildows to America Colair's Parental Cortrol Controls
Queue a file for downloading.	Enter file library. Select file. Click on Download Later.	Can automate waiting downloads with the Flash Sessions feature.	The Parental Costrol feature can only be used by the master account the master account the master account a the permanent surren name that was remarked many own from the master account the master are the master account the master account the permanent surren name that was remarked them; you for this may be not the master account to the master account th
Read replies to a message.	Open a listing of messages. Double-click on a message. Keep pressing forward arrow to look for subject preceded by Re	A nonthreaded interface is easier for beginners, but a hindrance to advanced users.	Since Distance Colors James Colors Garden Magner Fareful Control Mag
Save a chat transcript.	Choose Logging from File menu. Enter name for log file. Click on Open for Chat log. Keyword: CHAT. Click on Close in Log window.	Moves you into a similar chat room if one you're trying to access is full.	Family Values: Parental Controls let the primary screen-name holder allow or restrict privileges for other screen names.
Look up entry in encyclopedia.	Keyword: COMPTON'S ENCYCLOPEDIA Click on Search All Text. Type term and hit return.	The Compton's area is filled with supplemental materials such as tips on researching.	PERSONAL PUBLISHER
Other Tasks	10		
Set up a Web page.	1		NO POSTAGE NECESSARY IF MAILED IN THE
View online animation.			UNITED STATES
Take a swing at "Today's Pitch" trivia game.	BUS	INESS REP	
Block Instant Messages.		WILL BE PAID BY ADDRESSE	
Search New	AT&T B	USINESS NETWOR	RK.

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Circle 133 on reader service card.

How They're Done

Rasic Tasks

CompuServe

What's Unique

The oldest online service, CompuServe has prospered compared to rivals GEnie and Delphi. It remains the only major service accessible with a standard character-based terminal emulator. WinCIM 2.0 hides most of this heritage, but CompuServe is still at home with more technical, professional users.

Basic Tasks	now mey re bone	wilat s offique
Add name to address book.	Choose Address Book from Mail menu and click on Add. Type name and press Tab. Enter user ID and optional service.	Direct support for telex, Notes, and NetWare MHS mail.
Queue a file for downloading.	Enter file library and select checkbox. Type name of file. Choose Retrieve Marked from Library menu.	Files can be marked only from their libranes or as the result of a search.
Read replies to a message.	Open listing of messages. Double-click on thread. Click on Map.	The map feature provides a good discussion overview using little screen space.
Save a chat transcript.	Go: CB. Double-click on a channel band. Choose Record Channel from Special menu.	CompuServe lets you change handles online, and has fixed subjects for certain rooms.
Look up entry in encyclopedia.	Go: ENCYCLOPEDIA. Double-click on Search Encyclopedia and type term.	While sparse on many subjects, Groller's tends to divide comple: topics into more articles.
Other Tasks		
Look up a phone number of someone across the country.	Go: PHONEFILE. Double-click on Access Phone File. Choose an option for searching. Enter criteria and view results.	Lets you search by address or geographical region.
Search articles in IQuest database.	Go: IQUEST. Double-click on Access IQuest. Enter category and subcategory numbers and type criteria. Select full-text articles.	Contains a comprehensive collection of more than 1 million articles in over 450 publications for research. (Costs extra.)
Use WorldsAway to communicate with other members.	Go: AWAY. Click on Enter Worlds Away. Choose an avatar. Click on OK.	Provides an animated environment for chatting.
Log into a remote site.	Go: TELNET. Double-click on Access a Specific Site. Type the site domain.	CompuServe is the only one of the four major online subscription services to support Telnet.
Review articles on computer topics.	Go: COMPDB. Double-click on Access Computer Database Plus (CIM). Double-click on QuickSearch.	Online Computer Library lets you search an online database of computer industry publications.



Nouveau Chat: In WorldsAway, you navigate and communicate with other CompuServe members via an onscreen avatar.



Online Graphics: CompuServe now offers its subscribers easy-to-save GIF images and other high-resolution graphics.



Fit to Print: CompuServe's Executive News is the most mature search option for subscribers who want to scan the newswires.





Surfing the Internet just took a turn for the better.

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The ADI MicroScan[®] 17X monitor puts a whole new spin on the way you work. In seconds, it can switch from landscape to portrait without closing any running applications.

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ADI builds monitors for leading PC companies worldwide, you know you're making a quality investment for the long haul. The MicroScan 17X is also backed by a three-year warranty. Best of all, you don't have to be a Web Master to get one. Just call 1-800-228-0530 for your nearest dealer.



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ADI Systems, Inc. 2115 Ringwood Avenue, San Jose, CA 95131

Microsoft Network

Offered with every copy of Windows 95, Microsoft Network has taken some of the finest elements of CompuServe and America Online and fine-tuned them for its host environment. As you'd expect from a young service, Microsoft Network's content is still meager, but the limited selection is offered in attractive packages.

Basic Tasks	How They're Done	What's Unique
Add name to address book.	Open Microsoft Exchange. Choose Address Book from the Tools menu. Choose New Entry from the File menu. Select Address Type. Enter name and address.	Supports Windows 95's Exchange universal in-and- out-box for sending and receiving messages.
Queue a file for downloading.	Go to FILE TRANSFER STATUS. Choose Options from the Tools menu. Select Pause Files as they are queued to defer downloads.	Microsoft Network smoothly pauses and resumes file transfers while you continue to navigate online.
Read replies to a message.	Enter a bulletin board. Double-click on a subject folder. Click on the plus sign (+) to the left of conversation topic.	Provides easy-to-follow graphical representation of message threads.
Save a chat transcript.	Go to CHAT. Chaose Save History from File menu.	Allows simultaneous participation in multiple chat rooms.
Look up entry in encyclopedia.	Go to ENCARTA and click on Find. Type the entry and hit Return.	Online version of Encarta has same interface as CD-ROM.
Other Tasks		
Use Shortcuts.	Choose Create Shortcut from the File menu, or drag icon onto desktop.	Provides convenient access to features even when you're not logged on.
Read Usenet newsgroups.	Go to OS/2. Double-click on OS/2 Internet Newsgroups. Double-click on Subject folder. Read conversation.	Newsgroups are distributed among forums and available through the same interface.
Access Microsoft's Bookshelf.	Go to MSBOOKS. Double-click on Step 3: Run Bookshelf Intro Edition. Click on Find tab. Type a term and click on Find.	Provides multimedia access to a variety of regularly updated references.
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See progressive graphics.	Go to MSN TODAY. Click on an image.	The richness of the art doesn't slow you down.



One World: Look familiar? The online version of Microsoft's Encarta encyclopedia shares the interface of its CD-ROM cousin.



Big Type: Say goodbye to Courier. Microsoft Network supports rich text format and dragand-drop OLE in e-mail and BBSs.



Come to Life: Large graphics come in gradually and don't make you wait to continue moving through the service.

"The Best Choice"

...in the uninstaller field. PC Week, August 7, 1995



PC Computing, March 1995

"Most Powerful"

...of all the uninstallers. Family PC, September 1995

"Best of Class"

InfoWorld, July 24, 1995

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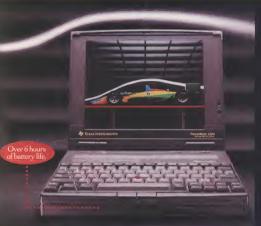
Prodigy

Once far behind in the online-service features race, Prodigy has moved earnestly to include a modern mail system, easy Web integration, and offline functions. Better still, it's lost the quarter-screen ads that were its trademark. The new Prodigy promises to be excellent, but it's still going through growing pains.

Basic Tasks	How They're Done	What's Unique	
Add name to address book.	Jump: MAIL. Choose Address Book from the Mail menu. Type entry and press Tab. Type address. If necessary, click on Internet Address button.	Prodigy offers a special version of E-Mail Connection for offline mail reading.	gowing date or m
Queue a file for downloading.	Jump: FILE LIBRARIES. Select a shareware collection and category, then select a file. Click on Download Later.	All Prodigy file libraries are moderated.	HAUE FUN!
Read replies to a message.	Enter a bulletin board. Click on Begin Reading Notes. Click on topic and subject. Click on Read Replies.	Forum moderators can provide a sound file introduction to their bulletin board.	Greetings: In addition to basic text, Prodigy lets you deliver premade but customizable slide-show greeting cards with graphics.
Save a chat transcript.	Jump: CHAT. Select a topic and conversation. Click on Logging On.	Provides a single interface for multiple instant messages.	GUTS Week 1
Look up entry in encyclopedia.	Jump: ENCYCLOPEDIA Click on Multimedia Edition. Type search termand press Return. Choose an article from the list.	Web-based encyclopedia has downloadable pictures and sounds.	See the scoreboard Take the rules quiz
Other Tasks			Read the rules Meet last game's win
Play Mad Maze.	Jump: MADMAZE. Click on Start the Game.	Graphical adventure game is built into main online service.	Make a Purel Equation (positional lateral residence) As the Lateral and Accept cone This continue and Auch. Te
Read newsgroups.	Jump: NEWSGROUPS. Click on Explore Newsgroups. Double-click on a newsgroup. Double-click on a thread.	Prodigy supports a "kill file" of unwanted posters and allows easy access to newsgroup FAQs.	Quiz: Guts is an aptly named trivia game available on Prodigy—if you miss just one question, your score is wiped out.
Play Guts.	Jump: GUTS. Click on Play Guts. Click on Try the Next Question.	Questions get progressively more difficult in multiweek competition.	The Index Power Index I have I
Send greetings.	Jump: GREETINGS. Click on Shop for Cards Now. Select a card. Enter the ID of the recipient.	Lets users send animated electronic greeting cards.	November's resurred the system. Celebrating the First Citizens Beauer Stand Grant Justic Last Quien Revenee 1, 1995
Record a macro.	Choose Record Macro from the Goodles menu and name it. Navigate the service using keystrokes. Choose Stop Recording.	Macros are an effective way to navigate the older parts of the service.	Web Connection: In an effort to distinguistself, Prodigy is creating proprietary Web

content accessible only to Prodigy members.

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Navigate the Web

Using Netscape's Navigator 2.0 with a direct connection to the World Wide Web int as easy as logging on to one of the four major online services, but it offers a much richer, more cost-effective online experience. Plus, you can piece together your own Web setup by adding new viewer applications—something you can't do on commercial services. If you want to add 3-D support, for example, simply download a 3-D viewer and install it as a helper application.

But from this embarrassment of riches, what is the ideal setup for navigating the Net? PC Computing searched long and hard for all the right pieces. Taken together, these will help you get the most from the Web.

For the browser, start with Netscape's \$79.95 Navigator Gold 2.0. The new version improves newsgroup reading, introduces frames for better page layout, and supports Sun's Java language. Java lets you send programs—not just text and graphics—over the Web. Navigator 2.0 also offers an applications program interface (API) for online apps that can launch from the Navigator window, and they both provide e-mail.

Navigator Gold adds the ability to edit HTML documents from within Navigator's main window. If your service provider supports this feature, you can publish Web pages and post revisions to your pages with a single click on Navigator's toolbar.

Netscape's \$54.95 Power Pack provides one-stop shopping for souping up Navigator. It includes:

 SmartMarks, Chat, and file viewers. Tired of constantly returning to pages to check for the elusive New icons? SmartMarks scans pages and notifies you of changes to your favorite sites, turning you

into the ultimate Web potato.

Chat. Yak it up with fellow Net denizens.
 Netscape's Chat provides Windows access to the Internet Relay Chat, a real-time, multiroom environment similar to the online services' popular chat features.

File viewers. The Power Pack also has viewers for several popular Web file formats, including Adobe's Acrobat (for WYSIWYG, high-resolution documents), Apple's Quick/Time (for video files), and Progressive Networks' RealAudio Player (for real-time delivery of audio files). Xing Technology's StreamWorks can also deliver near-real-time audio via the Web, and video clips as well.

The Web moves into the third dimension with the Virtual Reality Modeling Language (VRML). Instead of serolling up and down a page, you can maneuver around the halls of a museum and fly by landmarks. Several VRML browsers should be available by press time, but one of the first to support. Netscape is Paper Software's WebFX.

While not as navigable as true 3-D technologies like V RML, Apple's QuickTime VR provides a level of realism on 386-based machines that's difficult to achieve on Silicon Graphics workstations. You can look around a room, look up and down, pick up objects, and spin them. QuickTime VR viewing will probably be built into a future version of the QuickTime movie player for Windows and the Mac.

PICKS

PC COMPUTING'S DREAM WEB SETUP

Here are the essential materials you'll need to build your Ultimate Web Surfboard. You can find helper applications and information links at PC Computing's Web site (http://www.zd.com/~pccomp/).

- Browser: Netscape's Navigator Gold 2.0 http://home.netscape.com/
- Web Tracking: First Floor Software's SmartMarks http://home.netscape.com/comprod/smartmarks_install.html
- Chat: Netscape's Chat
- http://home.netscape.com/comprod/chat.html
- Document Viewer: Adobe's Acrobat Reader http://www.adobe.com/Software/Acrobat/
- Panoramic Scenes: Apple's QuickTime VR
 http://gbr.guicktime.apple.com/
- http://qtvr.quicktime.apple.com/
 Real-time Audio: Progressive Networks' RealAudio Player
- http://www.realaudio.com/
 Real-time Audio and Video: Xing Technology's StreamWorks
- http://www.xingtech.com/
 VRMI_Paper Software's WebFX
- http://www.paperinc.com/
- Phone: Quarterdeck's WebPhone http://www.qdeck.com/
- Alternative Phone: VocalTec's Internet Phone http://www.vocaltec.com/
- Videoconferencing: Connectix's VideoPhone http://www.connectix.com/
- Access Control: SurfWatch Software's SurfWatch http://www.surfwatch.com/

Quarterdeck's WebPhone integrates with the company's Mosaic Web browser to let two people talk via the Internet as they would on a telephone. It, too, faces competition—from VocalTec's Internet Phone and Third Planet Publishing's DigiPhone (www.planeteers.com/index.htm).

While not directly related to the Web, Connectix's \$100 QuickCam has filled a unique niche for

Web users who want to post a quick photo or video. Now Connectiv's VideoPhone lets up to six users videoconference using inexpensive cameras (but relatively costly connections). White Pine Software's CU-SeeMe product can also create videoconferences over the Internet in conjunction with video cameras.

Finally, for blocking your children's access to adult content, check out Surf Watch Software's Surf Watch.

Netscape Navigator

Basic Tasks	How They're Done	What's Unique
Add name to address book.	Choose Address Book from the Window menu. Choose Add User from Item menu. Complete the Name field, press Tab, then enter the e-mail address.	URLs in e-mail are live.
Queue a file for downloading.	Find FTP URL and drag to desktop. To download the file later, drag shortcut to your page.	Navigator 2.0 can accommodate multiple simultaneous FTPs.
Read replies to a message.	Choose Netscape News from the Window menu. Double-click on name of newsgroup.	Uses a three-paned interface. All URLs mentioned in message text are hyperlinks.
Save a chat transcript.	Launch Web chat software to open a connection to the chat server. After discussion, choose Save As.	URLs sent during chats can send all participants to the relevant Web page.
Look up entry in encyclopedia.	Choose Open Location and enter the URL for an encyclopedia. Locate search engine. Type a term in form field and choose link from the list of items returned.	Britannica Online (www.eb.com/, boasts the most complete textual content of any online encyclopedia, but it's a feebased service.
Other Tasks		
Look at the Star Trek Voyager with VRML.	Configure to launch the VRML player when a VRML file is downloaded. Choose Open Location and enter URL for Paramount Voyager site (voyager.viacomz.com/).	InVista's WorldView VRML allows true 3-D navigation via the Web.
Watch a video with StreamWorks live video streaming player.	Configure to launch the player when a StreamWorks file is downloaded. Choose Open Location and enter www.xingtech.com/streams/ testdrv/testdrv.html	Xing Software's Streamworks viewer can send streaming video as well as audio.
Listen to sports, news, and commentary from the ABC network via RealAudio audio player.	Configure Navigator to launch the player when a RealAudio file is downloaded. Visit ABC News site (www.realaudio.com/contentp/abc.html). Click on a link to download a RealAudio file.	RealAudio 2.0 allows for real-time broadcasts over the Web.
View a live multimedia	Open Location www2.nando.net/	The Nando Times uses Java to



Message Boards: While its searching controls are weak, Navigator puts a great interface on Usenet newsgroups.



Reality Check: The photorealistic QuickTime VR offers more detail but less freedom of movement than graphics-based VRML.



Web Apps: Using a simple Java applet, c|net brings some interactivity to its site with scrolling headlines at the top of the page.

nt/nando.cgi?java.

present information erigagingly

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Bell's featured computer artist is Steven Lyons.

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Printers Get Personal

SYNOPSIS

BUDGET PRINTERS: No need to compromise; get crisp 600-dpi pages for less than

\$500.142

PROOF ON THE PAGE: Our tests show that not all ink jets are slower

than lasers. 143

Today's ink jets also print in color. 144

HIGHER-SPEED LASERS:

Why wait? New desktop printers bit speeds of up to 12 ppm, yet cost less than \$1,200. **150**

SPEED AND QUALITY:

Performance and output varied widely in our tests. **151**

ow that visions of the paperless office have receded like baby boomers' hairlines, another reality is settling over the workplace: Today all desktop business printers are personal printers. You can find 6-page-per-minute, 600-dpi printers for less than \$500 on the street. Need color? No problem.

These days, costs are too low and quality too high to deny anyone in the office a printer of their own choosing. If nothing else, personal printers reduce those infuriating backlogs on the 16-ppm powerhouse down the hall.

Meanwhile, sophisticated graphics interfaces are calling for more complex fonts, graphics, and color, and printer technologies are shifting to meet these changing needs. In many cases, ink jets are elbowing aside inexpensive laser printers. Why? Color has become crucial for many business documents, if only for highlights or a company logo. Ink jets certainly can't match the color quality you'll get from thermal-wax-transfer printers, but we're talking personal here.

Ink-jet prices have always been seductive. Now their print quality is starting to lure buyers away from lasers. You can get either technology for well under \$500: a piddling amount that even the bean-counters in accounting won't bother you about.

If your budget allows you to spend as much as \$1,200, you can put your hands on a laser printer with features that three years ago were only available for twice that much: PCL 5 support, resolution enhancement, fast RISC processors, infrared ports, and more.

We included both classes of printers in this roundup to help you find the right balance of features for your dollar. In the pages that follow, PC Computing's lab results will help you identify the printer that best meets your needs.

GREAT VALUE:
Texas Instruments'
microLaser Win/4
churns out 4 pages per
minute at 600 dpi, but
costs only \$449.

NO COMPROMISE: Want fast, rich color without forfeiting text quality? Take a look at Hewlett-Packard's DeskJet 855C. For \$499, you can have it all.

Get network printer speeds and the best laser text and graphics print quality from Okidata's 12-ppm OL1200—at a price that

won't break the bank.

BY MARTY JEROME

FSA Wonder

Confest Co



Speni Demon

Pennies Per Page

Executive Summary

In the budget-minded, under \$500 category, there are a surprising number of snappy performers with admirable output quality. One particular standout is Texas Instruments' microLaser Win/A. Alaser printer that can render up to 600 dpi, the microLaser produces output of a caliber that will embarrass many printers costing three times as much. For color, Hewlett-Packard's Desklet 855C is the clear favorite, offering impressively rich hues and reasonably fast print times.

They cost less than a cross-country, round-trip ticket. Their text and halftones are clearer than those produced by the \$1,800 top-drawer laser printers you could buy five years ago. Did you ever believe you'd get so much printer for less than \$500?

And we're talking much less than \$500. More than half the machines in this category cost less than \$400. Lexmark's WinWriter 1500 ink jet costs an astonishing \$329. You may have submitted larger expense reports for a business dinner. The price of consumables is also surprisingly low. Toner and ink costs for all of the printers in this category average 2.5 cents per page—across the board.

Five of the printers we tested were black-and-white lasers; five were color ink-jets. As expected, text quality

and speeds were higher on the monochrome lasers, but the ink jets offer remarkably good output if you don't mind waiting for color. All but one of the printers produce black text at 3 to 7 pages per minute. The old industry standard of 300-dpi resolution is also being eclipsed by a crisper 600-dpi resolution.

Low price, solid print speeds, and crystalline print resolution are the staples of a good printer, but what else do these machines bring to the party? Not much. All were designed to deliver as many of the basics as amunfacturing costs allow, never mind the frills. And deliver they do. But what you see is what you get. Typically, expandability is limited (and when possible, expensive). If you expect your printing needs to grow, plan to spend more on a printer at the outset.

The Price is Right There's really no budget laster printer that will stretch your dollars further than Texas Instruments' microLaser Win/4. A printer with graphics device interface (GDI), the microLaser Win/4 uses your PC's CPU and memory for processing pages without affecting system performance. And pages flew from this 4-ppm printer—in some cases faster than from printers with engines rated at 6 ppm. Text was zazor-sharpy halfones were clean and well defined. We also liked the machine's small size and its ability to send pages out the top or the front.

If you need a fast laser printer, don't miss Brother's



Small Wonder: Don't let the \$449 price tag fool you. Texas Instruments' microLaser Win/4 prints quality black-andwhite pages—and beats its own 4-ppm rating on text.



Rainbow Warrior: Hewlett-Packard's DeskJet 855C ink jet not only produces rich, pleasing color—it also bests some monochrome laser printers in flat-out performance.

HOW THEY COMPARE

PRINT QUALITY AND PERFORMANCE FOR UNDER \$500

Black-and-white output speeds varied greatly among under-\$500 laser and ink-jet printers. Brother's WI -660 laser was the fastest overall, although Hewlett-Packard's DeskJet 855C-a color ink-jet printeroutperformed two laser printers to take fourth place. Text quality from all of these printers was uniformly good; graphics output quality varied widely.



Brother WL-660: Nice shading in image is offset by coarse dot patterns.



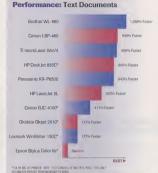
Canon LBP-460: Grainy resolution and lack of contrast reduce clarity.



and shading are accurate,



Okidata Okijet 2010: and insufficient detail.





Panasonic KX-P6500: Image is too dark, with some abrupt edges.



HP LaserJet 5L: Contrast is good, but gradations could be smoother.



TI microLaser Win/4:

nice overall quality.

There's good contrast and

Canon BJC-4100: Detail is sharp, but too much black ink hurts clarity.



Image suffers from banding



Lexmark WinWriter 150C: Contrast is fine, but dot pattern is too coarse.



Epson Stylus Color IIs: Resolution and detail are good, but image is dark.

WL-660, with an effective throughput of just over 5 ppm in our tests. Canon's LIB-460, Texas Instruments' microl.aser Win/4, and Panson's 46-ppm KX-P6500 all print text faster than 4 ppm. The KX-P6500 and microl.aser Win/4 printers were also the top performers in the graphics sprinting tests.

As print quality goes, Hewlett-Packard's LaserJet 5L was right behind the microLaser Win/4 in monochrome text. And the LaserJet 5L's support for PCL 5 makes it attractive to people who simply

need a fast monochrome printer.

For color printing, you can't beat the Desklet 855C, an ink-jet printer that drew high praise across the board for its performance and print quality. This isn't surprising, given that the Desklet family established the ink jet's beathbead against personal laser printers. The Desklet 855C was the fastest of the ink jets overall-bour twice as fast as its nearest competitor in both our text-only and color graphics tests. Its colors

are bright, richly saturated, and consistent. Likewise, Lexmark's WinWriter 150C drew praise for its color, despite some banding. At \$329, it's a low-cost alternative to the DeskJet 855C.

Hands On What can you expect from low-cost personal printers in the way of usability? More than you might expect, though these printers are a mixed bag. Canon's BJC-4100 and Esson's Stylus Color IIs, for example, are pleasingly small. But with the Stylus Color IIs, you have to swap eartridges when switching from monochrome to color.

Okidata's Okijet 2010, HP's LaserJet 5L, and Canon's LBP-460 lack visual indicators on their control panels, which can be infuriating Lexmark's WimWriter 150C, on the other hand, displays an animation of page movement and job progress on its front-panel LCD. It also has an indicator for ink levels.

in If you need affordable color output or a dependable rext printer, at these prices there's no reason to wait.

HOW THEY COMPARE

COLOR PRINT QUALITY AND PERFORMANCE FOR UNDER \$500

Most of the ink-jet printers performed on par in our color output test, with one standout: Hewlett-Packard's 300-dpi DeskJet 855C. Although other printers offer higher resolution, the DeskJet 855C's 300-by-300 color output was the best-looking by far.



HP DeskJet 855C:

Colors are rich, without oversaturation. Details are clear in both shadows and highlights, yielding a pleasant and well-balanced image. This printer produced the best color overall.

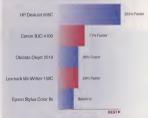


Canon BJC-4100: Bright output and good contrast are marred by random dots.



Okidata Okijet 2010: Composite black causes fading and dot patterns.

Performance: Color Graphics



NOTE: TEST DONSISTS OF 13MB TIFF FILE PRINTED FROM ADDRESS PHOTOSHOP



Lexmark WinWriter 150C: Image is faded but shows good contrast.



Epson Stylus Color IIs: Contrast is a bit too high, and banding is obvious.



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The Best Low-Cost Personal Printers

ser	Price*	Rated Speed	RAM/ Max. RAM	Resolution (dpi)	Maximum Paper Size	Paper Capacity	PDL	Verdict
microLaser Win/4 Texas Instruments (800) 848-3927 Resder Service No. 721	\$449	4 ppm	512K/512K (also uses system RAM)	600 by 600	8.5 by 14 inches	100 sheets	GDI	* * * * Impressive speed, features, and print quality at a decent price.
er Jet 5L vlett-Packard 1) 752-0900 der Service No. 722	\$479	4 ppm	1MB/9MB	600 by 600	8.5 by 14 inches	100 sheets	PCL 5	**** Good print quality and fast graphic output, but only averag text speed.
asonic KX-P6500 asonic 0) 742-8086 der Service No. 723	\$499	6 ppm	512K/4.5MB	600 by 600 (enhanced to 600 by 2,400)	8.5 by 11 inches	100 sheets	GDI, PCL 4.5	****Decent speed, acceptable print quality, and helpful usability features.
ther WL-660 ther Int'l 0) 284-4357 der Service No. 724	\$395	6 ppm	512K/4MB	600 by 600	8.5 by 14 inches	200 sheets	GDI, PCL 4	* * * Fastest text output, but average graphics speeds and coarse dither patterns.
non LBP-460 ion Computer Systems D) 848-4123 der Service No. 725	\$349	4 ppm	128K/128K	600 by 600	8.5 by 14 inches	150 sheets	PCL 4	** * Exceptional performance for the price, but coarse graphics quality.
Jet				Littlegatory				
DeskJet 855C Hewlett-Packard (800) 752-0900 Reader Service No. 726	\$499	7 ppm black, 3 ppm color	1MB/1MB	600 by 600 black, 300 by 300 color	8.5 by 14 inches	100 sheets	PCL 3	****Top-note color quality at surprisingly fast outpu speeds; the best color buy.
nWriter 150C mark Int'l 0) 358-5835 der Service No. 727	\$329	3 ppm black, 0.5 ppm color	0MB/0MB (uses system RAM)	600 by 300 black and color	9 by 14.33 inches	145 sheets	GDI	*** Great print quality for a great price, but poky performance.
non BJC-4100 non Computer Systems 0) 848-4123 der Service No. 728	\$369	5 ppm black, 0.8 ppm color	64K/64K	720 by 380 black and color	8.5 by 14 inches	100 sheets	Canon	** * Speedy, brigh colors at a bargain pric but distracting dot patterns detract from image quality.
ijet 2010 data 0) 654-3282 der Service No. 729	\$365	3 ppm black, 0.25 to 0.5 ppm color	0MB/0MB (uses system RAM)	600 by 300 black and color	9 by 14 inches	150 sheets	GDI	** High-quality, affordable color— if you don't mind waiting for printouts.
lus Color IIs son America 0) 289-3776	\$349	4 ppm black, 1 ppm color	15K/15K	360 by 360 black and color	8.5 by 14 inches	100 sheets	Epson	* * Slowest of all and hard to set up; printing in color requir swapping black and tricolor cartridges.
	*ESTIMAT	ED STREET PR	ICE					
der Service No. 729	*ESTIMAT	0.5 ppm color 4 ppm black, 1 ppm color	15K/15K	360 by 360 black and	8.5 by 14 inches *** Accepta		Epson **Poor	

COREL DESAM!



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Includes Plu

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- CORE PHOTO-PAINT 6 1,000 photos
 CorelDREAM 3D 6 1,000 TrueType® and Type I fonts
 Corel MOTION 3D 6 Over 750 3D models
- Corel MOTION 3D 6 Corel PRESENTS 6















Bargain Printers

If you need more than ten minutes to decide whether to buy one of these printers, you're thinking too hard. Put the cost into the larger context of your department's budget. You may have even spent more for a couple of business lunches.

The more pressing question is, how will your printing needs change over the next six months? If you'll suddenly yearn for finer resolution and print quality—or faster performance—you'll be happier in the long run paying for a better printer up front. Next, you should decide whether or not you'll need color.

Most businesspeople turn to a personal printer as quick, convenient alternative to the backlogged network printer down the hall. They primarily produce pages of monochrome text or business graphics, and rarely need resolutions higher than 600 dpi. These are clearly the people Texas Instruments had mind when it introduced its microLaser Win/4. But if you hardly ever need to produce halftones or fancy business graphics, and you care more about speech, Brother's WI-660, Canon's LBP-460, and

Panasonic's KX-P6500 are excellent alternatives.

Getting color on the cheap means switching from laser to ink-jet technology. It also means losing laser performance, although even the low-cost ink jets in this roundup aren't laggards.

Hewlett-Packard's Deskjet 855.6 is the best of the loc scolor quality and performance go. The consistency, brightness, and saturation of hues are surprisingly good—especially when you consider the machine? 4549 price tag. In produces some of the best test you'll find from ink-jet technology as well. Lexmark's Win-Writer 150C is a capable alternative, although when all is said and done, we'll stick with the Deskjet 855C.

If you're on a tight budget and better color performance is a must, Canon's BJC-41100 is a good bet. It was faster at color output than all but the DeskJet 855C. Its colors are bright but tend to streak. For the occasional accent, however, it may be all the printer you need.

Whatever your personal printing needs, there's no reason not to have an affordable color ink-jet or quality laser printer on your desk.



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Chameleon Desktop includes WinSock TCP/IP and is 100% DLL/VxD. Chameleon requires only 6KB memory and sets up in five minutes.



HOST ACCESS

Telnet: VT100, VT220, VT320, TVI, Wyse, TN3270, TN5250, Visual Script Editor & Player, X Windows,* NEW! Session Manager

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NFS Client & Server,* FTP Client & Server LPR/LPD, NEW! 3270 Printer

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SMTP Mail with MIME, IBM PROFS, Phone Tag, Tag It

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High-Speed Lasers

Executive Summary

High-end personal printers might sound like a contradiction in terms, but with street prices dipping below \$1,200—and in many cases well below \$1,000—these workhorses are destined to end up on many desktops. Okidata's \$1,199 OL1200 provides network-printer speed and the finest text and graphics print quality of any laser printer in this roundup. If you need a PostScript printer, consider Apple's LaserMylire Select 380 or Xerox's \$4510.

No one says this aloud, but sometimes the "local" printer you're requesting isn't really to augment your use of the network printer. It's to replace it. It's a little executive privilege you snag for yourself.

But if you're trying to bid adieu to the network printer's breadline-like queues, you need better print quality and performance than a \$400 printer can provide.

How much do you have to spend for a high-quality personal printer? The best ones cost more than \$500, but as PC Computing's labs discovered, you needn't lay out more than \$1,200. Between these two prices lies a broad spectrum of performance and features.

Monochrome Mania Okidata's OL1200 is a \$1,199 laser printer that rivals many network models. Its 12-ppm print engine made it the top performer in

Fast and Beautiful: Okidata's OL 1200 not only turned in the best performance of the laser printers we tested, its print quality was unmatched—in both text and image clarity.

this roundup. Print quality in both text and graphics was superb. Text popped off the page and halftones showed surprising subdeties in grayscales. A simulated watermark feature lets you print gray text messages—such as confidential, copy, or top-secret—under the body text of your document.

Usability got high marks, too. The OL1200's printer-management software is pleasingly sophistic racted. It reports the status of a print job and can be configured to stay active so that an icon flashes to alert you of problems. Although the procedure or installing toner could be easier, the OL1200's performance, print quality, and price make it far and away the best high-speed personal laser we've seen.

Two other notewordry performers are Apple's Laser-Writer Selec 360 and Xerox's 4510. Both are 10 loppum, 600-dpi primers that support PCL 5 and PostScript Level 2 (PostScript is an option orthe 4510). The Laser-Writer comes with 7MB of RAM, which curiously was not enough to print a 13MB TIFF image in PostScript mode. In contrast, Xerox's 4510 comes with 2MB of RAM, yet had no problem. Both offer many network interface options and are priced near \$1,200.

Print quality from the LaserWriter Select was excellent, while that of X-rox's 4510 was good but not spectacular. Since these products straddle the personal and small-workgroup printer markets, usability suffers, sepcially in setup. The X-rox 4510's software, for example, is nich in functions but difficult to install. We had a bear of a time getting Apple's printer drivers to work with Windows 3.11. Kudos to the 4510's display panel, which is easy to interpret and very informative. The LaserWriter's display is useful too, and necessary because the machine doesn't provide onscreen feedback.

If you're looking a bit further down the price slope, NEC's SuperScript 660i offers a set of features that's almost identical to Hewlett-Packard's venerable LaserJet 5P's, for \$200 less. Both machines are 6-ppm, 600-dpi lasers that come with 2MB of RAM, expandable to 50MB, and support PCL 5.

But the similarities end there. HP's LaserJet SP the latest in the line that defined personal laser printers—easily outperformed NEC's SuperScript. In fact, the LaserJet SP was one of the faster machines we tested. However, the SuperScript supports Post-Script Level 2 and GDJ, and the LaserJet SP does not. The LaserJet SP's and the SuperScript's print quality in both text and graphics was similar, though neither printer could match Okidata's OL1200 in crispness and halftone quality.

When it came to usability, we liked the LaserJet 5P's space-saving ability to send pages out the front or the top, but we didn't like having to remove the toner

HOW THEY COMPARE PERFORMANCE AND PRINT QUALITY FOR UNDER \$1,200

The primary reason to spend more than \$500 for a personal printer is to get better performance. The performance chart at right gives you a guick summary of how these under-\$1,200 printers stack up in text-only print tests. While all of the printers in this category employ monochrome laser technology, and allexcept Kyocera's Ecosys FS-400A-do so at 600 dpi, similar text quality can be found among the under-\$500 lasers as well. The difference in print quality is most pronounced when it comes to gravscale images. The image featured in the samples below is an unretouched, full-color TIFF image rendered in gravscale halftones by the monochrome laser printers. If you expect to print photographic images, be sure to consider these results in addition to the performance data.





Okidata OI 1200: Resolution is fine; shading has some abrupt edges.



Xerox 4510: The dot pattern is too coarse, and contrast is a bit too high.



Apple LaserWriter Select 360: Shading and resolution are best overall



HP LaserJet 5P: Dark shadows and abrupt gradations detract.



TI microLaser 600: Dot patterns are discernible. but shading is accurate.



Kyocera Ecosys FS-400A: Shading is poor. contrast high, and dots big.



Epson ActionLaser 1400: Shadows are far too dark to be acceptable.



NEC SuperScript 660i: Image has dark shadows and sharp gradations.

cartridge to clear a paper jam. The SuperScript's tall and compact design also saves space, and its memory is easy to upgrade. Given its low cost, we'd be happy to settle for its slower performance. Generally speaking, it's a better buy than the LaserJet 5P.

The Small Print Three of the printers we tested failed to generate much excitement at PC Computing's labs: Epson's ActionLaser 1400, Kyocera's Ecosys FS-400As, and Texas Instruments' micro-Laser 600. Blame it on their poor-quality output and mid-dling performance. All Cost between 5599 and 8580, and perform at 4 to 5 ppm. The Ecosys FS-400A is also the only 300-dpi printer in this category, and its \$599 street price includes only 1MB of RAM. The

ActionLaser and the microLaser have 2MB of RAM.

Texas Instruments' microLaser 600 is the best printer of the three. It comes with Adobe's Memory Booster software, which helped performance considerably. Epson's compact ActionLaser is a space-saver, and Kyocera's Ecosys 185-400A has a very claborate LCD, which we found quite useful. But none of these three machines offers usability advantages that make them stand out from the pack. Look for their prices to drop in coming months.

But why wait? If you need a high-quality, networkspeed desktop printer, you can choose from several bargains available today. Bid that network queue farewell, once and for all.

The Best Desktop Laser Printers

Laser	Price*	Rated Speed	RAM/ Max. RAM	Resolution (dpi)	Maximum Paper Size	Paper Capacity	PDL	Verdict
Okidata OL1200 Okidata (800) 654-3282 Reader Service No. 73 I	\$1,199	12 ppm	2MB/34MB	600 by 600	8.5 by 14 inches	600 sheets	PCL 5e	* * * * Excellent speed, print quality, and software features; the best in this category.
LaserJet 5P Hewlett-Packard (800) 752-0900 Reader Service No. 732	\$899	6 ppm	2MB/50MB	600 by 600	8.5 by 14 inches	350 sheets	PCL 5	*** Decent text speed and slow, high- quality graphics output at an attractive price.
LaserWriter Select 360 Apple Computer (800) 776-2333 Rouder Service No. 733	\$1,199	10 ppm	7MB/16MB	600 by 600	8.5 by 14 inches	250 sheets	PCL 5, PostScript Level 2	* * * Admirable speed, but couldn't complete TIFF test image despite 7MB of RAM.
SuperScript 660i NEC Technologies (800) 632-4636 Reader Service No. 734	\$699	6 ppm	2MB/50MB	600 by 600	8.5 by 14 inches	200 sheets	GDI, PCL 5, PostScript Level 2	* * * Nice output and respectable graphics speed at an unbeatable price, but slow on text.
Xerox 4510 Xerox (800) 349-3769 Resider Service No. 735	\$1,200	10 ppm	2MB/10MB	600 by 600	8.5 by 14 inches	250 sheets	PCL 5e	* * * Fast, high- quality text, but uneven graphics output and difficult to set up.
ActionLaser 1400 Epson America (800) 289-3776	\$849	4 ppm	2MB/18MB	600 by 600	8.5 by 14 inches	100 sheets	PCL 4P, PCL 5e	** Low cost, but slow performance and poor output quality.
Ecosys FS-400A Kyocera Electronics (800) 232-6797 Reader Service No. 737	\$599, plus \$269 for 4MB of RAM**	4 ppm	1MB/5MB	300 by 300 (enhanced to 300 by 1,200)	8.5 by 14 inches	100 sheets	PCL 5, PostScript Level 1	* * Slowest overall text printing, mediocre output, and lackluster drivers.
microLaser 600 Texas Instruments (800) 848-3927 Reader Service No. 738	\$850, plus \$299 for 4MB of RAM	5 ppm	2MB/10MB	600 by 600	8.5 by 14 inches	250 sheets	PCL 5, PostScript Level 2	* * Fair speed and quality, but couldn't complete TIFF image even with extra RAM.
	****E	xcellent	***	* Good	*** Accepta	able	**Poor	* Unacceptab



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cartridge to clear a paper jam. The SuperScript's tall and compact design also saves space, and its memory is easy to upgrade. Given its low cost, we'd be happy to settle for its slower performance. Generally speaking, it's a better buy than the Laser let 5P.

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LaserJet 5P Hewlett-Packard (800) 752-0900 Reader Service No. 732	\$899	6 ppm	2MB/50MB	600 by 600	8.5 by 14 inches	350 sheets	PCL 5	* * * * Decent text speed and slow, high- quality graphics output at an attractive price.
LaserWriter Select 360 Apple Computer (800) 776-2333 Reader Service No. 733	\$1,199	10 ppm	7MB/16MB	600 by 600	8.5 by 14 inches	250 sheets	PCL 5, PostScript Level 2	* * * Admirable speed, but couldn't complete TIFF test image despite 7MB of RAM.

SuperScript 660i NEC Technologies (800) 632-4636 Reader Service No. 734

Xerox 4510 Xerox (800) 349-3769

Reader Service No. 735
ActionLaser 1400

Epson America (800) 289-3776

Ecosys FS-400A Kyocera Electronics (800) 232-6797 Resider Service No. 737

microLaser 600 Texas Instruments (800) 848-3927 Reader Service No. 738

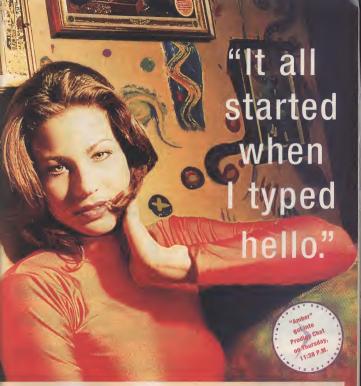


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"Next thing you know, I'm on Prodigy Chat with a guy named 'Fool4Love'. What a trip! Anyway, 'Love' (that's what I like to call him) and I started talking about everything imaginable. Old flames, careers, movies and meeting online. Turns out he's a real computer whiz. 'Love' showed me all this great stuff about Prodigy including their Web Browser, Bulletin Boards and this genes facture called Interest Groups. I can instantly plug in to the specific area I feel passionate about, like The Adventurous Traveler, without unnecessary tooling around on Home Pages. I know what my interests are and I don't want to waste time to get to them. Speaking of interests, 'Love' and I are still very much involved. We always get online and explore. You never know what you'll find out there. After all, that's where I found 'Fool4Love' In fact, I'm meeting him here tonight. I can't wait to see what teal blue eyes look like."

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Maybe the guy down the hall can wait for the network printer to get around to printing his documents. Maybe he's one of those people who submits print jobs all day long but doesn't pick them up nutil the next morning. If you, on the other hand, are so eager for your printouts that you're tempted to delete all the print jobs ahead of yours in the queue, it's time for a personal printer.

With the cost of high-speed printers coming down in a hurry, there's no reason not to have a high-quality laser printer on your own desk. As you'll discover, this is far from an impossible wish to fulfill. As a matter of fact, if you haven't shopped for a printer in a while, you'll be surprised by how far your dollars will go.

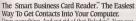
Át \$699, NEC's SuperScript 660i achieves the best price point for a 6-ppm, 600-dpi laser printer. Unlike Hewlett-Packard's LaserJef 5P, the SuperScript supports PostScript Level 2 in addition to PCL 5e. Performance lagged behind that of the \$899 LaserJef 5P, but the price difference makes it worth considering. For about \$500 more, you can buy 10-ppm performance and better print quality with Apple's Laser-Writer Select 360, which supports PostScript Level 2 as well as PCI. 5. The LaserWriter's standard 7MB of RAM should satisfy most of your PostScript printing needs, but you may need more memory for large photos. If you expect to need network connectivity, both printers offer several interface options. Although the LaserWriter suffers from some usability glitches, it's the best choice for snapey PoStScript performance.

For roughly the same price, however, Okidata's \$1,199 OL1200 delivers the fastest performance of any printer in this roundup. Its 12-ppm print engine lives up to its billing. Better still, it produces the best print quality of the bunch. Lack of PostScript support is its only drawback, but if will give you fast, high-quality output for most business needs. This is the best personal laser printer money can buy.

Lab testing performed by Project Leader Ibrahim Gul and Technical Specialist Daisy Zhao.



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Deluxe 5. Managing Your Money from MECA, and Kiplinger's Simply Money from 4Home Productions, also let you manage finances

BY MIKE HOGAN

on your PC, but they don't yet include online banking (watch for new versions early this year).

These four personal-finance packages usher in a new and welcome era in banking. And banks are quickly adapting to accommodate these new programs. If your institution doesn't yet offer online banking, perhaps it's time to consider transferring your account to one that does.

We put these programs through PC Computing's Usability Labs to see how much conventional-banking users could manage from their PC. The results were encouraging. Our testers found that all four packages make it easier to balance your checking, savings, loan, and investment accounts, as well as pay your bills. These financial managers also help you compare loans, plan for retirement, and meet other savings goals. If they could just figure out how to po \$20 bills through the phone receiver, they'd have the whole thing licked.

The online-banking features in Money and Quicken Deluxe give you the easiest access to recent financial information, making them our favorites. Both packages can even save you money, since most banks charge titled or nothing for online banking—a welcome departure from the hundreds of dollars a year you can run up in hidden monthly fees and overdraft charges.

Quicken Deluxe, Managing Your Money, and, to a lesser extent, Simply Money, have traditional hierarchical interfaces with tools and functions located on menus and multiple onscreen windows. Quicken Deluxe and Managing Your Money add opening screens for users to find features more easily

Money takes a different tack by placing tools on the appropriate program views instead of in the menus. This makes Money more accessible to the new user, but more restrictive and probably not as satisfying for the experienced hand. Simply Money also includes

drag-and-drop icons of accounts and payees that can be placed onto action icons to start tasks such as paying bills, but none of our testers liked this approach.

Instant Payback If you've been putting off using a personal-finance program just because you can't find the time to get organized, wait no more. Money, Quicken Deluxe, Managing Your Money, and Simply Money walk you through the process of setting up your savings, checking, and investment accounts, as well as categories you need to sort your financial transactions. Your initial time investment is about an hour, Plus, if you go online with Money or Ouicken Deluxe, you can sidestep the tedium of entering your transaction history from check registers and creditcard statements. Depending on your bank, you can download up to three months of transactions from all your accounts the first time you're online. With that historical information in hand, you can immediately create budgets, transfer funds, make sharp financial decisions, and analyze your savings and spending patterns. As you build a financial history over time, you can more accurately plan investments. Instant updates of your transactions and account balances are a tollfree phone call away-anytime of the day.

Although it sounds a bit scary, online banking is pretty simple. All you have to do is click on a bank account in the online screen of either program and locate your bank's icon. Your transactions are delivered in categories with their tax consequences identified, if appropriate, as with a payment for day care.

Because Money and Quicken Deluxe have your bank do most of the work for you, these packages are by far the easiest to set up and use. The current versions of Managing Your Money and Simply Money make you type in a lot of account history before you can even access the program's analytical functions. But

SIDE BY SIDE

TRACK YOUR ACCOUNT BALANCES ONLINE



Microsoft's Money: Its online banking process involves more steps than Intuit's Quicken Deluxe, but Money gives you more information at one time about recent online activities with your accounts.



Intuit's Quicken Deluxe: All it takes is one buttonclick to update credit-card and other bank account data in Quicken Deluxe, but you get only one piece of information at a time.

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we'll pre-load it with the latest software, Compton's Encyclopedia, cool CD games, and then deliver it right to your door. With convenient consumer financing, a 30-day money-back guarantee! and 24-hour-aday, 7-day-a-week telephone support' you can depend on. In fact, *PC Magazine*: said our technical support was rated one of the best in the industry. So if your kids questions

about computers make you uncomfortable, don't worry, we'll be more than happy to help you answer them. (Sorry. That stuff about the birds and bees is up to you.)

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Microsoft's Money: The Payment Calendar in Money includes a list of bills due and also includes the impact they will have on your checking-account balance if you choose to pay them at that time.



Kiplinger's Simply Money: The bill-payment reminder in Simply Money is less elegant than Microsoft's Money and doesn't take your account balances into consideration.

But once you're regularly online with your bank, you can say goodbye to most of this data entry and calculator tapping. If you add online bill-paying, you can forget about endless check writing, too.

The Check's in the Modem Unlike online banking, online bill-paying has been around for years (though it's been used sparingly). However, the release of the most-recent versions of Money and Quicken Deluxe has inspired bill-paying services to address two main obstacles that have kept people from paying bills online. First, online billpaying is cheaper. While service charges differ slightly, they're now less than the price of a stamp for each bill. Second, if your creditor accepts online payments, you no longer need to authorize your bill payments several days in advance.

Online bill-paying with Managing Your Money and Simply Money is convenient, but our testers still found this task far easier in Money and, to a lesser degree, Quicken Deluxe. All of the applications step you carefully through the bill-paying process and provide easily accessible help.

Money groups bills that are due at the same time of the month and displays a handy calendar of those dates, plus a box that shows how paying one bill or another affects your account balance. In Quicken Deluxe, you can drag and drop a transaction onto a financial calendar to create a recurring reminder of when to post bills, Managing Your Money and Simply Money let you schedule reminders for monthly payments, but lack a detailed calendar of your scheduled transactions.

Fire Your Accountant The reports in Managing Your Money and Simply Money nearly equal the full complement found in Money and Quicken Deluxe. All four programs' reports profile your financial situation and uncover significant trends in your saving and spending habits. The reports are organized into home, business, and investment categories, containing snapshots of your net worth, cash flow, capital gains, portfolio value, and other important financial data.

Our testers found creating reports the least intuitive feature of the financial managers. Choosing the right report and laving it out with the proper date range, securities, and categories aren't simple tasks for most people. Money and Quicken Deluxe made reports out of some of the most commonly asked questions, such as, Where did I spend my money last year?; What am I worth as of today?; and How am I doing on my budget?

Quicken Deluxe also lets you keep up to six graphical views of your finances handy in its Snapshots gallery of customizable charts of your assets and liabilities, actual and budgeted expenditures, and portfolio's rate of return. Money lets you display a single Chart of the Day on its home menu from a more limited set of views. Managing Your Money also has snapshots-although they are text-only charts.

Each product exports tax data in the standard tax exchange format so that if you've been keeping track of your transactions' tax status during the year, you can get a jump on filing your 1040 form by either creating a tax report or exporting your data into a taxpreparation program like Intuit's TurboTax. Quicken Deluxe even includes a tax planner to help you find out the tax consequences of different transactions.

That Figures Beyond tax planning, all four programs offer a variety of handy financial calculators and planners that let you quickly figure out differences between loans, dividend payments, and savings for college or retirement. Only Quicken Deluxe and Managing Your Money offer a home-inventory feature for tracking the value of your possessions.

Reviews: Money, Quicken Deluxe, Managing Your Money, and Simply Money

When it comes to analyzing your investments. Money and Ouicken Deluxe offer the most substantive portfolio-management features, but Ouicken Deluxe surpasses Money in usability, analytical tools, and investment research. All four applications let you download stock prices to update your investment accounts, but Ouicken Deluxe includes Mutual Fund Finder, an extra-charge subscription to the Morningstar list of the 4,500 top-performing mutual funds. The list is updated quarterly for a monthly charge based on how often you use it. In addition, you get easy-

to-use tools that help you screen and analyze your

Quicken Deluxe also includes Investor Insight, another subscription service that lets you download up-to-the-minute information from Dow Jones News Service and company research from Standard & Poor's, You're charged based on the number of securities and companies you track. And Quicken Deluxe provides several charting and analysis tools you can apply to a company's current and historical data.

Quicken Deluxe bundles Netscape's Navigator 1.22 and offers a free Internet connection to Intuit's home page and to the home pages of banks that offer online banking with Quicken Deluxe. This makes it easy for you to shop for loans, credit cards, and

CLOSE-UP GENERATING PERSONAL REPORTS

MECA's
Managing Your
Money: Although
MYM's Quick
Reports aren't as
graphical as
Quicken Deluxe's
or Money's, they
offer a handful of
financial snapshots
for updates on your
accounts.

Fanancial Snapahat				789	ange Date
Het Worth	91 OZS	Eudgeling	Actuals To Date	Budget To _ Date	Diference
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Checking & Savings	78,647	. 1995 Fáng	Statux Single		Bracket 269
investment:	8,022		Income		7810
Cosh	0	Green Add Green	95,600 Tel 55,600 Par		10,17
Suidable Certs	35,689		45.300 Ya		AND DESCRIPTION OF THE PARTY OF

other bank services. Money offers Internet access via Microsoft Network for a monthly fee. Managing Your Money and Simply Money do not include Internet connections.

Does all of this sound like a little too much, a little too soon? If so, you're not alone. Banks and software companies expect these changes in banking preatries to be a bit dizzying for people at first. But not to worry: Online banking and bill-paying will continue to be a viable option for a long time.

Even if you don't use the electronic-banking aspects of these programs, you'll find that they can do wonders for your personal finances. And when you decide to try online banking or bill-paying, you'll be more prepared for the banking changes of the future.

The Best Personal-Finance Software

Product	Price*	Banking	Calendary Webse	Investor.	Reports	Management of the second	Resement Research	Eggs Marie	West Supp	Verdict
Money for Windows 95 Microsoft Corp. (800) 426-9400 Reader Service No. 711	\$35	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Stock quotes only	No	Yes**	****An excellent application for financial minimalists and novices.
Quicken Deluxe 5 Intuit (800) 816-8025 Reader Service No. 712	\$60	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	**** The most complete financial-management solution anywhere, anytime.
Managing Your Money 2.0 MECA Software (800) 288-6322 Reader Service No. 713	\$40	In Q1 '96	No	Yes	Text	Yes	Stock quotes only	Yes	No	** An OK interface with some nice program touches, but short on important features.
Kiplinger's Simply Money 2.0 4Home Productions (800) 773-5445 Reader Service No. 714	\$35	In Q1 '96	No	No	No	No	Stock quotes only	Yes	No	* * Behind the curve in terms of interface and money-management tools.
	* ESTIMATI	EO STREET P	RICE "R	EQUIRES AN	MSN ACC	TAUC				

THE FIRST SOFTWARE THAT HARNESSES ALPHA WAVES TO FAX DIRECTLY INTO SOMEONE'S BRAIN.

(THAT'S IN THE PIPELINE. MEANWHILE, YOU WON'T FIND A FAX PROGRAM MORE ADVANCED THAN NEW DELRINA WINFAX PRO 7.0 FOR WINDOWS 95.)

Alas, Delrina developers still haven't figured out how to fax into someone's brain after 11 P.M. (when rates are lower) without waking him or her up.

WM Fortunately, their latest release — new Delrina WinFax* PRO 7.0 — is as easy and powerful as one would expect from the best-selling, most award-winning fax software in the world. It fully exploits new Windows* 95's 32-bit

Designed for
Microsoft*
Windows 95

multi-tasking, multithreading talents for true background faxing, greater speed and more. But it doesn't stop there. WM With the new TalkWorks^w telephony option and your

voice modem, WinFax PRO 7.0 turns your computer into an integrated in-box for faxes, e-mail and voice mail. It even takes phone messages, distinguishes



between fax and voice calls, has fax on demand and identifies callers before you pick up. WM. And there's more. Built-in compression cuts fax transmission time (and phone bills) by up to one-third. It now supports gray-scale faxing, integrates with Microsoft* Exchange, and includes OCR, 101 ready-to-use fax cover sheets and tools to design your own.

as part of new Delrina CommSuite" 95, the complete, affordable, integrated communications software solution for Windows 95. WM All of which should suffice until the new alpha wave faxing program is ready. (Hmm. Perhaps if we partition your brain so that one half can receive faxes while the other remains undisturbed.)

Circle 182 on reader service card.



Productivity Report Card

Quicken and Money

They can't print out cold, hard cash. But today's personal-finance packages can do just about anything else you'd want from a bank—and you don't even have to wait in long lines. How easy is it to put their impressive features to work? To find out, PC Computing's Usability Labs brought in testers at all levels of experience using personal-finance packages. They were asked to complete a series of everyday financial tasks in five key areas with each product. Quicken Deluxe and Money were neck and neck as out testers' favorites.

Reconciling Statements

Simply	Quicken	Managing Your	r Money for	
Money 2.0	Deluxe 5	Money 2.0	Windows 95	
	1		1	

Users completed all the tasks involved in balancing and reconciling an account statement with all four products, but had some difficulty getting there with Managing Your Money and Simply Money, Quicket Deluxe achieved a perfect satisfaction score in this test. Money was a close second, but was considered less interactive—although still leasy to understand. Users found the procedures in Managing Your Money and Simply Money And S

Setting Up and Updating Records

Simply	Quicken	Managing Your	Money for
Money 2.0	Deluxe 5	Money 2.0	Windows 95
	V		V

Testers found it easy to set up checking and savings accounts in all four products, thanks to step-by-step prompts and easy-to-understand instructions. However, when it came to everyday tasks such as entering new checks and new transaction categories, testers found Managing Your Money's and Simply Money's interfaces difficult to understand and their navigational clues somewhat awkward. Quicken Deluxe and Money were the clear winners overall.

Electronic Bill-Paying

Simply	Quicken	Managing Your	Money for	
Money 2.0	Deluxe 5	Money 2.0	Windows 95	
			V	

Although it's been available in all of the personalfinance managers for years, electronic bill-paying is the weakest feature in the all packages we tested. Simply Money and Managing Your Money were particularly difficult to master in this area; usability testers were able to complete only one-third of the bill-paying tasks with these programs. They finished two-thirds of the tasks with Quicken Detuxe and had better success with Money which had a perfect score for its help system.

Reports and Budgeting

Simply	Quicken	Managing Your	Money for
Money 2.0	Deluxe 5	Money 2.0	Windows 95
	V		V

Creating a report or a budget is one of the most complex activities these programs perform. But all our usability testers were able to complete these tasks accurately using Quicken Deluxe and Money. Although most testers were successful with Managing Your Money and Simply Money, Managing Your Money and Simply Money, Managing Your Money and Simply Money was criticized for its confusing terminology.

Online Banking

Simply	Quicken	Managing Your	Money for
Money 2.0	Deluxe 5	Money 2.0	Windows 95
	V		V

Since our usability tests were conducted just prior to the full launch of online banking, our testers were among the first to attempt online banking with Money and Quicken Deluxe. (Simply Money and Managing Your Money did not offer this feature at press time.) Our testers were able to successfully complete nearly all of the standard tasks. Slightly more testers completed the task with Money, but. Quicken Deluxe left users more certain of, and therefore more satisfied with, their results.

Make Banking Simple

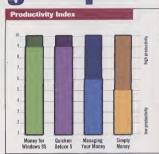
Money and Quicken Deluxe tied for first place when it came to getting the job done in all the task categories. Both earned PC Computing's Usability Seal of Approval, and scored a nine on PC Computing's new Productivity Index. This index takes into account user satisfaction, the number of assigned tasks successfully completed, the effectiveness of each application's documentation and help functions, testers' final preference, and the technology and features for each product.

The biggest surprise of our usability tests was the plaudits that Money won for having superlative online help at every turn, while Quicken Deluxe's Help placed a disappointing third. It's hard to judge the relevance of this shortcoming, since Quicken Deluxe tied with Money for first place in successfully completing all the designated tasks. And Quicken Deluxe usually logged the highest score in tester satisfaction with task completion.

It's a familiar computing paradox: Money seems friendlier than Quicken Deluxe when you first meet it, but Quicken Deluxe is the more



Money for Windows 95: We rate Money a superb financial manager that's tightly focused on core money-management activities. It offers fewer menu choices, but more direction on every screen for financial novices.



navigable product once you get to know it.

While MECA's Managing Your Money and Kiplinger's Simply Money didn't earn the Usability Seal for a single category, users liked Managing Your Money's SmartDesk interface, and Simply Money's pop-up Help clues. But testers found it too hard to complete most tasks with these products, and in the end, no one was willing to use them in place of Quicken or Money for their own finances.



Quicken Deluxe 5: Quicken Deluxe is the most complete personal-finance manager with flexible online banking, bill-paying, and investment management, as well as the best gateways to related financial products, such as Intuit's TurboTax.

Raise Your Net Worth

Today's robust personal-finance applications dabble in nearly every aspect of money management and planning. But for buying securities, retirement planning, filing expense reports, and filling out income-tax returns, you'll need specialized tools. The programs below are among the best we've found. Each provides a helping hand in taming a different part of your financial picture.

QuickXpense for Windows Filling out expense reports is chump work: a tedious, time-consuming, fussy affair. Unfortunately, if a slao crucial. Portable Software's Quick-Xpense takes some of the load off by letting you electronically download check and credit-card data (from the same phone number you use for electronic banking) into the appropriate fields of your expense report.

The more you use QuickXpense, the faster your expense reports are completed because it remembers your choices and automatically assigns repeated entries or similar



expenses to the correct fields and categories. For example, it would recognize that the Red Roof Inn is a hotel.

QuickXpense does your math and offers safeguards to keep you from entering the same expense twice, leaving out an expense, forgetting to file a report, or forgetting to collect on one. You can send finished reports to your accounting department over your company's expense form. apper copy that resembles your company's expense form.

QuickXpense for Windows 95 and Windows 3.1x/ Portable Software / (800) 478-7411 / \$70 est. street price / Reader Service No. 715

Quicken Financial Planner Hoping to win the lottery? Unfortunately, the odds are slim, so why not hedge your bets and develop a good financial road map for the rest of your life.

Intuit's Quicken Financial Planner walks you through the process with a series of simple questions. If you're a Quicken Deluxe user, half of your job is already done



because Quicken Financial Planner reads the Quicken Deluxe information off your hard drive Personal-finance managers commonly include financial calculators for retirement, college funds, and other goals. But Quicken Financial Planner creates a comprehensive plan that integrates all your long-range goals and suggests the best mix of investment and savings instruments to get you there.

Quicken Financial Planner / Intuit / \$40 est. street price / (800) 826-7567 / Reader Service No. 716

Reuters Money Network 2.5 Even if you have a financial plan, you still need a vehicle for wheeling and dealing. Reuters Money Network from Reality Online provides both an online discount broker and a cormucopia of financial news, research, and analytical tools so you can make smarter buying and selling decisions. Not even Investor



Insight in Intuit's Quicken Deluxe 5 is as comprehensive.

You can execute trades through the PC Financial Network discount broker, and download current stock, bond, and mutual fund research from the likes of Standard & Poor's and Morningstar (\$7 to \$30 per month depending on online services and research selected). And Reuters personalized news-clipping service, which draws information from Dow Jones and other leading online publications, can help you stay current. Reuters Money Network 2.5 gives you quick access to daily stock quotes and to historical pricing charts for comparisons. It's a lot of resources to juggle, and Reuters helps you stay on top of it with information filters and market alers. When all is said and done though, you'll have to regularly invest a good deal of time to make it work for you.

Reuters Money Network 2.5 / Reality Online / (800) 346-2024 / \$25 est, street price, plus research fees / Reader Service No. 717

StreetSmart 2.0 If you like the data you get in Reuters Money Network, but have your brokerage account at Charles Schwak, try StreetSmart 2.0. A customized version of Reuters Money Network is built into StreetSmart—as re Schwak's own research resources (monthly fees can run up to \$30 per month, depending on online services and research selected)—and Schwab will give you a 10 percent discount for using its online trading service.



The portfolio manager in StreetSmart has a different flavor than the ones in similar finance applications. Depending on your tastes, you may even save money with StreetSmart research because it also gives you free access to an online version of Schwab's Mutual Fund Performance Guide, a database of historical and current information on 900 equity and bond funds whose source is also Morningstar.

StreetSmart's e-mail system for getting technical support and product updates also gives you access to marvelous financial libraries in which you'll find everything you ever wanted to know about the market and investing, but were too embarrassed to ask a broker.

StreetSmart 2.0 / Charles Schwab / (800) 334-4455 / S39 est, street price, plus research fees / Reader Service No. 718



Monocle 2.0 Manhattan Analytics' Monocle does just one thing—report mutual-fund investment data—but it does it extremely well.

You get no stock or bond information, news, or portfolio management. But when it comes to mutual-fund analysis, Monocle's tight focus provides a definite edge over onnibus products like StreetSmart or Reality Technologies' WealthBuilder. Monocle's genius is that it conveys a lot of information on one or more funds at a glance, using highly graphical line charts that make comparisons easy. This apolication is a quick road to wealth.

Monocle 2.0 / Manhattan Analytics / (800) 251-3863 / S149 est. street price / Reader Service No. 774

TurboTax Deluxe for 1995 Even if you're rich, Uncle Sam makes sure that accounting for your money takes only slightly less time than making it. Doing your own taxes is never pleasant, but Intuit's TurboTax Deluxe eases you into the 1040 form with as little shock to your nervous system as possible.

Like Quicken Financial Planner, Turbof Tax asks you inteligent questions and fills out those insecrutable tax forms and schedules for you—not to mention taking care of all that arbitrary math the Internal Revenue Service invents anew every year. You can get a jump on April 15 by assigning tax consequences to transactions in your personal-finance manaered urine the year.

TurboTax Deluxe for 1995 / Intuit / (800) 984-1040 / under \$45 est, street price / Reader Service No. 720



On the **Money**

Microsoft's Money for Windows 95 and Intuit's Quicken Deluxe 5 finished our usability testing in a dead heat. And both scored well above Managing Your Money from MECA and Kiplinger's Simply Money from 4Home Productions.

That isn't to say that Money and Quicken Deluxe are identical. Far from it. Both are well-wrought examples of financial-management applications, but each program targets a different category of users. Microsoft spent years playing catch-up to the feature set in Intuit's Quicken Deluxe. However, Microsoft finally got wise, and decided to focus on computing novices and financial minimalists, leaving the well-entrenched Quicken Deluxe to financial sophisticates. Our usability exters liked the way Money packed

Our usability testers liked the way Money packed the most-used, personal-finance features into a taskoriented interface. Many deemed it easier to navigate than Quicken Deluxe—if only because it's less cluttered with portfolio-management features, reporting functions, and online services.

Money's cause is helped by the fact that online

banking promises to bring new masses of novices into the personal-computing fold. Of course, no one offers more online services than Intuit, which challenges Money with a streamlined Quicken Deluxe.

Managing Your Money and Simply Money? We have to wonder why anyone would willingly choose cither of these over Quicken Deluxe or Money, although some banks will only support these. Managing Your Money, for example, will be the exclusive offering from Bank of America and Nations Bank; and Simply Money may be your only choice at some smaller banks. The truth is you may want to pick your bank based on the software it supports.

The bottom line? If you just want the basics, Money does a fine job. If you really like to jiggle your piggy bank, nothing compares to Quicken Deluxe.

MIKE HOGAN is a frequent contributor to PC Computing. Usability Lab testing was performed by George Hackman, Lulit Bezuayehu, and Lydia Karlowicz.



Windows 95 puts the power of a server on your PC. The new Plug & Play Back-UPS® Pro™ will keep it there...



Power Protection Handbook

What are the myths and musts of PC protection? What are the 10 most common

power protection mistakes? The top tips for adding reliability to your PC? Get your FREE copy and find out!

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handbook and Back-UPS Pro information.

If you're about to invest in a new multi-tasking operating system like Windows 95, experts say it may be time to invest in APC protection. Why? Because bad

power is the largest single cause of data loss, and on a multi-tasking system, your vulnerability is multiplied. When full protection affordable as a new mouse, it just doesn't make sense to leave your premium machine unprotected.

You get safe automatic shutdown event recording for power quality analysis, real-time display of UPS status and certified Windows 95 Plug & Play

Protect against the inevitable power hit with new Back-UPS Pro, the one and only UPS designed for Windows 95. Automatic Voltage Regulation (AVR) provides the edge you need for full protection against extended brownouts or overvoltages without draining the battery, while CellGuard' intelligent battery management extends battery life with fast recharge and deep discharge protection. The units even include built-in 10Base-T network cable/phone line surge protection for a bulletproof response to anything Mother Nature or Murphy's Law may send

on. Plus they're even backed by an up rantee against surge damage to your

derails) ou can't make a bad choice when company that protects more PC's

JPS vendors combined: APC.

of runtime on a typical 486, 280PNP. For Pentiums or more se the BU Pro 420PNP or 650PNP. e demo Disk, 60-page catalog, or erPage" at http://www.apcc.com



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Windows 95 puts the power of a server on your PC. The new Plug & Play Back-UPS° Pro™ will keep it there...



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data loss, and on a multi-tasking system, your vulnerability is multiplied. When full protection is as affordable as a new mouse, it just doesn't make sense to leave your premium machine unprotected.



event recording for power quality analysis, real-time display of UPS status, and certified Windows 95 Plug & Play compatibility for easy installation

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All in all, you can't make a bad choice when you choose the company that protects more PC's than all other UPS vendors combined: APC.

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The easiest and most reliable way to protect your data comes from the company that everyone trusts. Hewlett-Packard, the world leader in tape backup. The affordable HP Colorado T1000 stores up to 800 MB' using new TRAVAN" technology. It includes true Windows 95 software. One button backup and unattended operation make it a snap.

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A visual guide to the hottest new To Go

portable storage

BY ADAM MEYERSON AND SCOTT NAYLOR ILLUSTRATED BY TIMOTHY EDWARD DOWNS

ake your hard disk home with you. Put it in the mail. Lock it up. Back it up. Even carry it with you wherever you go. A new generation of removable storage devices liberates your data from the desktop—letting you put as much as 4.6GB of data in your pocket. What's more, for just pennies per megabyte, these drives offer unlimited storage: When you fill up one disk, just pop in a new one. You can even create an entire library of instantly accessible data.

Removable-drive options abound and media capacities vary. At 4.6GB, Pinnacle Micro's Apex drive offers top capacity, while SyQuest's EZ135 Drive is a low-cost 135MB option. Iomega presents two choices: the 100MB Zip drive and the new 1GB Jaz drive. Panasonic's 650MB PD/CD-ROM drive doubles as a CD-ROM drive. The technologies behind all these drives differ, and each has distinct benefits and drawbacks. Our visual guide explains how they work and which is best for your storage needs.

advantages are portability and low cost.

Zip / Iomega Corp. / (800) 697-8833 /

Interface: The Zip drive connects to your computer through a parallel port or SCSI controller.

Reader Service No. 742

Lomega Zip Drive

The Zip drive is like an oversize floppy. It uses a

· Cost: \$199 est. street price; \$20 per 100MB cartridge: \$10 per 25MB cartridge

• Capacity: 100MB

 Maximum Sustained Speed: 1.4MB per second

· Average Seek Time: 29ms

• Estimated Media Life: 10 years

hybrid of two technologies-standard hard-drive heads and the magnetic Writing Data: The media disk, rotating at 3,000 rpm, creates a cushion of air. To write data, the magnetic head emits media used in floppy disks. Its charge that changes the polarity of a spot on the magnetic media.

> Media: When you insert a cartridge, the protective door slides open, exposing the media and engaging the motor.



Verdict: The Zip drive is ideal for archiving, transporting, and sharing data. But its 100MB cartridge is not suitable for large backups. The media cost is 20 cents per megabyte.

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Now's the time to pack multimedia power with you when you're on the move. Because it's never been more affordable.

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"Twinhead's Slimnote 875 TX packs more features than any portable PC we've seen...we would recommend it as a desktop replacement, thanks to it's multimedia prowess and rich feature set..."

- PC Computing, August 1995

PCComputing

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Unlike those "bargain" packages, AutoCAD* LT Release 2 is based on AutoCAD, the world standard, so it gives you features the others can't. In fact, its features and their ease of use have made AutoCAD LT the best selling 2D CAD package in the world. And now with Release 2, AutoCAD LT is even easier to use and learn, with tool-tips and on-line help at every level. If you're new

you need without interrupting your work. And here's something else the others can't match. AutoCAD LT Release 2 reads and writes data just like AutoCAD software, so your work will be compatible with over a million AutoCAD users world-wide. Add to this free 90-day product support and available pre-drawn symbols packages for architectural, mechanical and electrical applications and you can

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And one inexpensive one.

drafting, Orientation can guide you step by step through the transition. To get you started quickly, AutoCAD LT automates the drawing setup process, defining drawing space and title blocks in one easy step. For occasional help with specific tasks, cue cards give you the on-screen answers



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SyQuest EZ135 Drive

10100111010117

Cost: \$199 est. street price; \$20 per 135MB cartridge

• Capacity: 135MB

 Maximum Sustained Speed: 1.24MB per second

Average Seek Time: 13.5ms

• Estimated Media Life: 10 years

hard-drive head and media technology.
SyQuest drives have become the de facto
standard for prepress shops and graphics
service bureaus. Unfortunately,
however, the new EZ135 Drive
doesn't accept older SyQuest
cartridges.

The FZ135 Drive is based on reliable

EZ135 Drive / SyQuest Technology / (800) 245-2278 / Reader Service No. 743

Interface: The EZ135 Drive attaches through either an IDE or SCSI controller. (A parallelport model is in the works.) dics Writing Data: The media distribution of a different data, a media in gap (Mc) head—which three 4 micro-

er in a control in etic house di n Filtange in the magnetic control the discovers the Bosonomia and A

The energy of Averse Epocation (sent debuts control

Media: Inserting a cartridge lifts the protective cover, exposing the media and starting the motor.



Vertict: The EZ135 Drive is an economical way to archive, share, or transport small amounts of data. Although it's faster than the Zip, it's more difficult to install and use. The media cost is 15 cents per megabyte.

Lomega Jaz Drive

The Jaz drive packs 1GB of data onto a 3.5-inch cartridge using two double-sided platters and four read-write heads. Its average

• Cost: \$599 est. street price; \$99 per 1GB cartridge; \$69 per 540MB cartridge

Capacity: 1GB
 Maximum Sustained Speed: 6.73MB

per second

• Average Seek Time: 12ms

• Estimated Media Life: 10 years

Writing Data: One of four thin-film recording heads reverses the polarity of the magnetic coating on either side of the two aluminum-based hard-drive platters.

Interface: The Jaz drive attaches to your computer via a SCSI controller. (An IDE model is planned.)

seek time and maximum

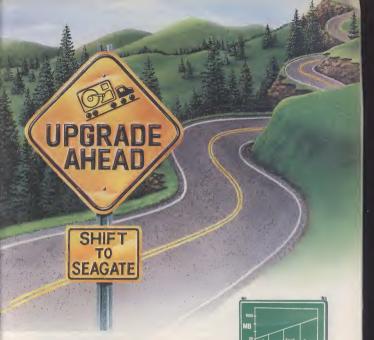
sustained speed are the fastest among the drives reviewed here. Jaz / Iomega Corp. / (800) 687-8833 / Rader Servic No. 744

and detect polarity changes created a thomas and detect polarity changes created a the magnetic changes having thems.

Media: When you insert a cartridge, the protective door opens, exposing two drive platters and releasing the brake.

Disk. Read/Write Head Protective Gase Motor

Verdict: Its 1GB capacity makes the Jaz drive suitable for backing up an entire hard disk—and then some. It's fast enough to use as a primary drive as well. Cartridges are a bargain at just 10 cents per megabyte.



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Medalist 1270sl	1.28 GB	Fast ATA-2	16.6 MB/s	10.5ms	5,400 RPM
Medalist 1640	1.62 GB	Fast ATA-2	16.6 MB/s	10.0ms	5,400 RPM
Medalist 2140	2.11 GB	Fred ATA A	16 6 MAR/s	10 0ms	E 400 PPM

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Advanced Logic Research,

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Panasonic PD/CD-ROM

- Cost: \$649 est. street price; \$50 per 650MB cartridge • Capacity: 650MB
- Maximum Sustained Speed: 870K per second
- Average Seek Time: 165ms
 Estimated Media Life: 30 years

The PD/CD-ROM is the first of the next-generation rewritable-optical drives. It combines the mechanical components of a quad-speed CD-ROM drive with new phase-change rewritable technology. The unfortunate trade-off with this useful combination is extremely slow performance. Expected media life, however, is an impressive 30 years.

Panasonic PD/CD-ROM / Matsushita Corp. /

orp./

Writing Data: A laser diode in the micro-optical head is focused at medium power through a holographic lens. This process heats the reflective media and creates nonreflective spots.

> Reading Data. The laser is focused at low ower to detect reflective and nonreflective areas. To crase data, the laser beam is people at high power to return the media to its reflective state.

Interface: The PD/CD-ROM requires a standard SCSI adapter. There are no parallelport or IDE options.

> Media: The cartridge resembles a CD caddie and is inserted on top of a retractable CD tray.



Verdict: The PD/CD-ROM is best suited for longterm backups of up to 650MB. Its performance is far too slow for more frequent use. With an average media cost of 8 cents per megabyte, it's economical.

Pinnacle Micro Apex

The Apex drive represents significant advances

- Cost: \$1,495 est. street price; \$175 per
- 4.6GB cartridge
 Capacity: 4.6GB
- Maximum Sustained Speed:
- 4.5MB per second

 Average Seek Time: 17ms
- Estimated Media Life: 30 years

in magneto-optical recording technology, and combines great performance with massive 4.66 B capacity. It's the largest capacity removable drive available; its cartridges have an expected life of 30 years.

Apex / Pinnacle Micro / (800) 553-7070 / Reader Service No. 746

Interface: The Apex attaches through a SCSI controller. No parallelport or IDE options are offered. Reading Data: The laser than on the media. When the am bounces back to read head detects and the polarity of the all-scape media created

Media: As the 5.25-inch cartridge is inserted, the protective door retracts and exposes the optical disk.



Verdict: Its 4-cent-per-megabyte media cost and huge capacity make the Apex attractive as a secondary-storage or archive device for servers. While the cartridges are portable, the drive is not.

Warning: Seat Belts Recommended.



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Unlimited Storage

Using removable storage can be liberating. But before you rush out to buy one of these drives, carefully consider how you intend to use it. As a backup solution, the media should be large enough to accommodate your data, perhaps as large as your hard disk. If you'll be using the drive as a replacement for your hard disk, you'll need to balanche high capacity with quick access times. For archiving or transferring small amounts of data, small-capacity drives are best. And if you plan to distribute or share data with others, compatibility should be your top concern.

The inexpensive, 100MB-capacity Zip drive is easy to install—working off the parallel port—and incredibly portable, making it the perfect, hassle-free means of archiving data. The Zip is also great for transporting files that work fit on a floppy. SyQuest's 135MB EZ135 Drive is faster than the Zip, but falls short in ease of use. Prices for the two drives are identical.

Iomega's Jaz drive is the fastest we reviewed. Its 1GB capacity makes it a suitable hard-drive replacement or backup device. The Panasonic PD/CD-ROM, a

proprietary combination of magneto-optical technology and a quad-speed CD-ROM drive, is an engineering marvel that's ahead of its time. At \$649, it's two drives for the price of one—but you'll make significant sacrifices in speed and performance. If megacapacity is what you need, Pinnacle Micro's Apex drive is a nickel choice. It's fast, durable, and—at \$175 for each 46618 cartridee—a windfall if you'r everflowing with data.

Whichever solution you choose, the benefits of using removable storage are many. It lets you take seldom-used files off your crowded hard disk, or create a library. When you need to run a program or access stored data, just pop in the appropriate disk. Unlike less practical tape backup devices, removable drives give you instant access to your data. And the more data you store, the less expensive the cost per megabyte. Security and media portability are also big advantages. You can drop your cartridges into your briefcase or lock them in the office safe, protected from fire and prying eyes. Best of all, your data will never outgrow your storage capacity again.



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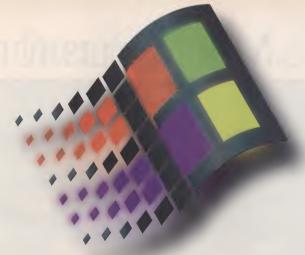
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 Quarterdeck CleanSweep 95
- Apte Internet Coach 1.0 B-Plan Business Planner 2.0
- Fitnesoft Life Form Multicom Home Improvement 1-2-3
- DocuMagix PaperMaster 2.0
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Mike Salisbury



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on PAGEMAKER 6.0.

k on a Sunday afternoon and you're finally crossing the last item off and's "to-do" list. Time to get physical, but the gym or a swim won't et outside for a walk—not a stroll around the block, or a neon and nower push. It's time for rugged walking.

lk tough

sservant trend-watcher knows that outdoor activity is booming, e boomingest activities is the pedestrian style. But what's only a noticed is that a majority of the millions of Americans now active outdoor iffestyles aren't "doing" anything out there. They're they're getting fit and enjoying the great outdoors.

s slipped the notice of most media," says Robert Hoffman, a

eople don't want to climb Kilamanjaro or strap walking whollts but they want to be outdoors after spending the better poly of the k stuck in an office or other indoor setting," says Hilliam A great while is the outdoors.

by the counting last on 11 Lt steps on a treadmill last on 2 compare.

> What's more happend walking, by skilling an automore the special of competition that (willful limit news) family of sentine activity For intuition provided in the control of sentine activity For intuition bicycle.

have of the consultation of the consultation of the consultation area, or about accomplishing bigger and bigger challenges—a smoother rock face, a

ride. No knock against these adventurious sooms but for them all out that drives the fictionally For this sudgest sealour, but for them all one in the same. Challenging terrain is embraced and enjoyed.

is rugged walking and what's making it so popular? Two words

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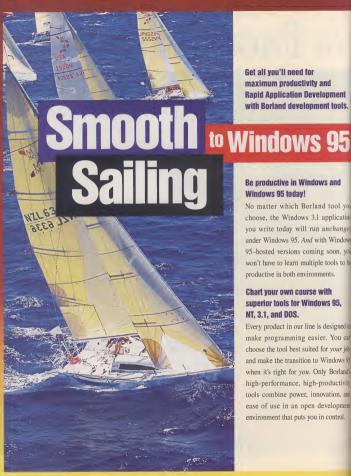
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When you upgraded to Windows 95, you probably found Explorer to be long on promise but short on delivery. Thank goodness for Turbo Browser, which offers essential features that Explorer missed, such as a file-preview window, batch processing, full-text searches, and compressed-file support. If you regularly move, back up, or sort lots of files, you need the power of Turbo Browser.

Turbo Browser gives you Explorer's familiar two-pane interface for navigating folders, and moving, copying, and



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beautifully drawn icons

illustrate what a button

Dabbler just as they do on

real paper. Drag the chalk

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powdery sketch marks; colors from crayons and

pens get darker as you apply more lavers. You'll

Tools also behave in

does before you select it.

option lets you scan your hard disk for all files containing a word or text string. Also, Turbo Browser's sophisticated queues let you collect files and later compress them, back them up, or move them all at once to a different location.

FILEBOX Turbo Browser for Windows 95

Proc. Includes filemanagement essentials

missing in Explorer.

Cons: Complicated.

Verdict: Windows 95

(800) 732-3002 (516) 759-3011

file management for

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nower users.

cluttered interface.

All of this power comes at a price-Turbo Browser's complex interface can be confusing. This isn't a tool for beginners. But if you know your way around a directory tree and you're sick of Explorer's limitations. Turbo Browser will cure what ails you. DYLAN TWENEY

GRAPHICS SOFTWARE

Dabbler 2.0

If you've ever held a crayon, you have all the training you need to master Fractal Design's Dabbler 2.0. Fashioned after the company's professional paint program, Fractal Design Painter, Dabbler lets aspiring artists and digital dilettantes experiment with chalk, charcoals, paper textures, and other natural media to learn how to draw.

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Dabbler 2.0

Pros: Makes doodles look like masterpieces-even if you lack artistic talent.

Cons: A 16- or 24-bit color graphics card is required to display images.

Verdict: A simple, seductive natural-media painting and drawing program.

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sound effects of drawing on paper; the faint whisper of brush bristles, the light rasp of charcoal on the page. Want to turn your doodles into a magnum opus? Dabbler also teaches you how to draw. The program ships on CD

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For a free demo version of QuarkXPress for Windows, and our 32-page Comparison Guide to Electronic Publishing, call 1-800-788-7835. Typographic control in Q in APress is unmatched. Each in in this head uses a different point size, calling for careful adjustment of leading (line spacing). No problem em snace or specify super-precise

ires are easy to control in QuarkXPress. You can adjust the size, proportions, contrast, color, rotation, skew, and flipping (mirror-

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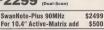




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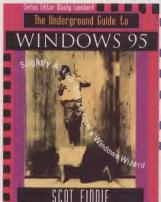
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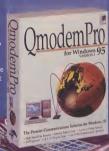


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your hard drive. You also have several choices for handling unwanted files, including moving them to another

drive, or to a network or laptop.

While CleanSweep may not be the fastest uninstall utility you can find, this new 32-bit version gives it a definite speed boost. It's also more affordable than MicroHelp's competing UnInstaller. And best of all, it's 100 percent Windows 95-compliant. For a simple, affordable way to remove old programs and files, get CleanSweep 95. JACK LYON

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gain access to information, and download files. The look and feel of Internet Coach is unintimidating to new users, and all of the explanations are in plain English. You don't need to be a computer expert to become an Internet whiz.

Adding sound to the program's already lively animation and vivid graphics would improve Internet Coach. Aside from that minor oversight, however, Internet Coach is a great way for novices to learn their way around the Netbefore surfing a real online wave. LULIT BEZUAYEHU

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CleanSweep 95

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Cons. We've seen faster uninstallers

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one document.

the process of building a

way to print your plan as

Cons: Lacks straightforward online help and an easy

Verdict: An excellent tool

lowered or raised the cost of a product or service by a specific percentage. The result is a solid, airtight business plan. Business Planner does have a few quirks. For instance, it's

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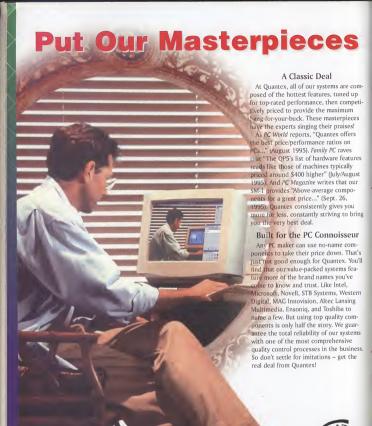


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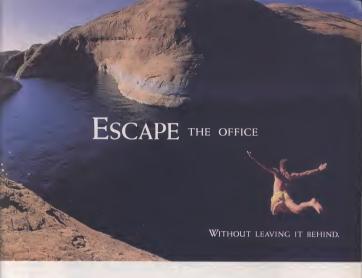


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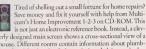
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DO-IT-YOURSELF CD-ROM

ome Improvement 1-2-3



erly designed main screen shows a cross-sectional view of a house. Different rooms contain information about plumbing, electricity, interior design, painting, shelving, and other subjects. Select the bathroom, for example, and the program gives you details on how to fix a leaky faucet or showerhead.

For fix-it novices, introductory videos feature experts

from The Home Depot. Unfortunately, the tips border on being clichés ("measure twice, cut once"), and most are little more than high school shop-class fluff.

To its credit, the program includes many specific topics, such as garage doors, and projects such as safetytesting garage-door openers. Each project has a narrated slide show of illustrations or a video that

walks you through the task. You can get information on the required tools, safety warnings, task-completion estimates, materials lists, and tips for working smarter. You can also print all of this information-handy since you probably won't have a PC by your side while tackling a repair.

Home Improvement 1-2-3 isn't the last word on home repair and maintenance, but it's a great start for the domestically challenged. And at \$35, it's a low-cost way to solve many household headaches. IAMES OF IVER CURY



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perMaster 2.0

We've been conned. The promise of the paperless office is a farce. Every day we use computers and printers to produce mounds of documents. But Docu-Magix's PaperMaster 2.0 brings the promise one step closer to reality, providing the means to store digitized images of handwritten or printed documents. Just scan the documents that clutter your filing cabinets-invoices, receipts, expense reports, and personal records-and stash

File View Tools Window Help Computer Administration Industry News Home Personal

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TIFF or IPFG files. PaperMaster's interface is designed in the familiar filecabinet metaphor, and space is limited only by harddrive size. To organize documents, you create cabinets, in which you create drawers that you can secure with

password-protected locks. Need to find, files quickly? Use keywords to search for any document

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Home Improvement

1-2-3 1.0 Pros: Step-by-step

too basic.

instructions for home renairs. Cons: Interface borders on cluttered and many tips are

Verdict: A crash course in home repair.

\$39 est, street price Multicom Publishing (800) 850-7272, (206) 622-5530 Reader Service No. 756

Pros: Easy-to-use file-

cabinet metaphor keeps documents accessible.

Pros: Long documents are a drag to scan and store. Verdict: The perfect solution for filing short documents that don't need to

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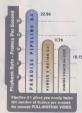
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Levview 4.2

Trolling the Internet for files without FTP Software's Keyview 4.2 is like traveling internationally without your passport: You can try, but you won't get very far. Without the proper viewer, you can't open many of the

more exotic file formats you encounter. Fortunately, Keyview is a viewing, conversion, and decompression utility that handles all the file formats you're likely to find online.

Keyview lets you automatically view more than 100



file types, without requiring the applications in which they were created. It supports the most common file formats, including GIF, JPEG, RTF, PDF, and HTML, plus esoteric formats like Siemens-Nixdorf Targon and MultiMate Advantage. Keyview converts files to or from more than 70 word processing and graphic formats. It's also OLE 2.0- and

of basic illustrations (called

Smart Drawings) and

ready-made templates to

put them in. Select items

from Drag 'n Draw's

libraries and shapes from

the toolbar, slap in your

own graphics, add the nec-

dreary flowcharts some-

the printer.

FILEBOX

Keyview 4.2

Pros: Lets you view and convert dozens of exotic online file formats

Cons: Lacks support for DBF and VRML formats. Verdict: An essential utility for viewing various

online files \$39 est, street price (800) 282-4387, (508) 685-3300 http://www.ftp.com Reader Service No. 758

Windows 95-compliant, and you can integrate it with Messaging API mail systems and most Web browsers. It can also decompress BinHex, UUencode, TAR, GZ, and Zip files.

For all its power, however, Keyview has some shortcomings. It can't read files stored in the common DBF datahase file format, and there's no support for VRML, a relatively new but important file format on the Web. These are nits, however. If you spend time online, Keyview is an essential part of your Internet toolkit. RICH SCHWERIN

BUSINESS GRAPHICS

Drag 'n **Draw** 1.1



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FILEBOX

Drag 'n Draw 1.1

Pros: Simple drag-and-drop drawing

Cons: Smart Drawings color palettes don't always take advantage of a rainbow of colors.

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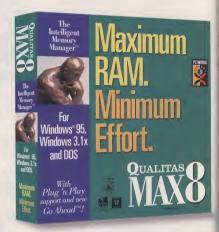
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Spotlight on Direct To You

DTY Guest Commentary

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Direct to You spec watch: Don't Settle for Less Than These Specs

EYE-CATCHING PAGES

Laser Printers: Quality First

e'll cut to the chase here: Nothing beats a laser printer for professional-quality output. Sure, ink-jets deliver cheap color and acceptable text. But when it's time to mail out that important contract, only a laser printer does your hard work justice. And the cost of laser technology won't hold you back any longer.

The new generation of laser printers offers high-quality output for less than \$500. And just because these printers are cheap doesn't mean you won't get your money's worth. Don't settle for less than 600-dpi resolution, and look for speeds of 4 to 6 pages per minute or faster. Expect the paper tray to hold at least 100 sheets and handle both 8.5-by-11-inch and 8.5-by-14-inch paper.

If you'll be printing mostly simple

text, then 512K of printer memory should be fine. However, if you plan to prim grayscale graphics such as blackand-white photographs or shaded bar graphs, make sure the printer includes at least 2MB of memory; and for larger, full-page graphics, you'll want 4MB. Check for PCL 5 support; it's quickly becoming an industry standard.

If you need faster print speeds, you can step up to a 6-ppm or 10-ppm, 600-dpi laser printer for between \$700 and \$1,200. These speedier models typically hold at least 200 sheets of paper; some, such as Okidara's new OL1200, hold as many as 600 sheets new OL1200, hold as many as 600 sheets of the printer you choose should also let you add as much as 8MB of RAM for queuing longer print jobs. And if you're serious about graphics, you may want to consider a PostScript option as well.

To fully exploit any printer's advanced features, make sure it comes with the proper drivers. Some of the older printers, for example, might not include drivers for Windows 95 or Windows NT. Be sure to check before you buy.

Finally, examine the printer's front-panel controls and software closely: Tasks like purging a print job or selecting a port should be easy to do without cracking open the documentation.

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LASER PRINTERS

GET PROFESSIONAL OUTPUT FASTER THAN EVER

Resolution: 600 dpi.

Speed: 4 to 6 ppm.

Paper Tray: Holds 100 sheets at a time and handles letter size (8.5 by 11 inches) and legal size (8.5 by 14 inches).

RAM: 512K of printer memory for text-only output, 2MB for text and graphics, and 4MB for full-page or detailed graphics.

Drivers: Up-to-date drivers for your operating system.

Printer Languages Supported: PCL 5 or optional PostScript.



Features and Options: 1,200-dpi resolution if you need razor-sharp graphics, 6- to 10ppm output, RAM expandable to 8MB, 600-sheet paper tray. Usability: Easy-to-use, front-panel controls or—even better—software with error messages to indicate empty paper trays, paper jams, and so on. Newer printers are beefing up their software-based controls.

Windows 95 Considerations: Make sure Windows 95 drivers are included with the printer. In many cases, Windows 95 will detect and set up your printer automatically.

Direct to YOU SPEC WATCH: Don't Settle for Less Than These Specs

HIGH-END DESKTOP SYSTEMS



CPU: 100MHz to 166MHz Pentium.

RAM: 16MB.

Secondary CPU Cache: 256K.

Display: 17-inch, 1,024 by 768 at 72Hz or higher refresh rate.

Video Card: 64-bit PCI graphics, 2MB of VRAM or WRAM, 72Hz or higher refresh.

Hard Drive: 1GB EIDE or SCSI-2

Bus: Six slots including two PCI.

Features and Options: 16-bit Sound Blastercompatible sound card, four available halfheight 5.25-inch drive bays, 21-inch monitor, graphics accelerator with 4MB of RAM, six-speed CO-ROM drive.

Usability: Flash BIOS for easy upgrades, tool-free cover removal, upgradable CPU socket, easy access to SIMMs.

Windows 95 Considerations: A Plug and Play BIOS lets Windows 95 reconfigure motherhoard resources if a conflict arises. Even without a Plug and Play BIOS, Windows 95 can detect resources and reconfigure a Plug and Play peripheral. Note that many Plug and Play BIOSs came out long before Windows 95 Check your BIOS date and upgrade it if a newer version is available

ENTRY-LEVEL DESKTOP SYSTEMS



CPU: 75MHz Pentium.

RAM: 8MB expandable to 32MB, 72-pin SIMMs.

Secondary CPU Cache: 256K.

Display: 15-inch, 800 by 600 at 72Hz or higher refresh rate.

Video Card: 64-bit graphics accelerator, 1MB of DRAM, 72Hz or higher refresh rate at all resolutions.

Hard Drive: 500MB EIDE.

Bus: Six slots including two PCI.

Features and Options: 16-bit Sound Blastercompatible sound card, four available 5.25-inch drive bays, 2MB of memory on graphics accelerator.

Usability: Flash BIOS for easy upgrades, tool-free cover removal, upgradable CPU socket, easy access to SIMMs.

Windows 95
Considerations: A
Considerations: A
Flug and Play 810S lets
Windows 95 reconfigure
motherboard resources
if a conflict arises. Even
without a Plug and Play
BIOS, Windows 95 can
detect resources and
reconfigure a Plug and
Play peripheral. Note
that many Plug and Play
BIOSs came out long
before Windows 95.
Check your BIOS date
and upgrade it if a newer
version is available.

NETWORK APPLICATION SERVERS



CPU: 100MHz, 120MHz, or 133MHz Pentium.

RAM: 32MB expandable to 256MB, 72-pin SIMMs.

Secondary CPU Cache: 512K.

Display: 14-inch, capable of

640-by-480-pixel resolution.

Video Card: 512K of RAM.

Hard Drive: 2GB SCSI-2.

CD-ROM Drive; Quad-speed.

Bus: Eight slots with a combination of EISA and PCI.

Features and Options: Multiprocessor architecture, RAIO Level 5, Wide SCSI-2, OAT backup, uninterruptible power supply, two half-height and two fullheight 5.25-inch drive bays with front-panel access, locking cabinet, integrated SCSI controller, Ethernet controller.

Usability: Servermanagement software, flash BIOS for easy upgrades, hot-swappable hard disks, upgradable CPU socket, easy access to SIMMs.

Windows 95
Considerations: You don't need a server for peer-to-peer networks. All you need are network cards—Ethernet, for example—and the appropriate cabling. Client drivers include support for NetWare, Windows NT, Banyan VINES and SunSoft

NETWORK FILE SERVERS



CPU: 66MHz 486DX2 or 75MHz Pentium.

RAM: 16MB expandable to 128MB, 72-pin SIMMs.

Secondary CPU Cache: 256K.

Display: 14-inch, capable of 640-by-480-pixel resolution.

Video Card: 512K of RAM. Hard Drive: 2GB SCSI-2.

CD-ROM Drive: Quad-speed.

Bus: Eight slots with a combination of EISA and PCI.

Features and Options: Server-management software, RAID Level 5, Wide SCS-2, OAT backup, uniterruptible power supply, two half-height and two full-height 5,25-inch drive bays with front-panel access, looking cabinet, integrated SCSI controller, Ethernet controller, two COM ports, one parallel port, swehoard and mouse.

Usability: Flash BIOS for easy upgrades, hotswappable hard disks, upgradable CPU socket, easy access to SIMMs

Windows 95
Considerations: You
don't need a server for
peer-to-peer networks.
All you need are network
cards—Ethernet, for
example—and the
appropriate cabling.
Client drivers include
support for NetWare,
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HIGH-SPEED MODEMS



Transmission Rate: 14.4Kbps for small-file downloads; 28.8Kbps for large-file downloads Internet access, and remote control/remote access.

Supported Standards: Data speed of V.32bis for 14.4Khns or V.34 for 28.8Kbps, Error correction of V.42: data compression of V.42bis: CCITT Group 3 Class 1, Class 2, and CAS (fax).

Compatibility: Haves AT command set.

Features and Options: Integrated voice, data,

and fax; onboard digital signal processor: on internal modems, 16550 UART. For external modems, get a fast I/O card with the 16550 UART chin

Usability: LCD readout on external models, Windows software with support for Zmodem, Ymodem. Xmodem, and Kermit Built-in scripts for CompuServe and MCI. Support for calling cards. Software setup on internal modems (no iumners).

Windows 95 Considerations: Windows can automatically detect most of today's modems without requiring any special features.

DESKTOP MONITORS



Size: 17-inch: 20- to 21-inch for CAD, desktop publishing, or graphics applications.

Resolutions: 1,024 by 768 for 17-inch; 1,280 by 1,024 for 20and 21-inch: 1,600 by 1,280 for CAD and document imaging.

Dot Pitch: 0.28mm or smaller for 17-inch, 0.31mm or smaller for 20- and 21-inch

Vertical Refresh Rate: 72Hz or higher at all resolutions Tube Type: Flat-square

Energy Star requirements. ability to save settings Ilsahility- Adjustable antiglare coating. onscreen controls.

Features and Options: Support for MPR II low-

emissions standards

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Windows 95 Considerations: Plug and Play support lets Windows 95 automatically identify a monitor (a Plug and Play graphics card is required) and select the proper video resolution.



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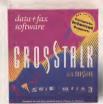
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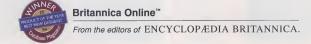


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Getting Up to Speed

siness Basics

With so much new stuff hitting the streets in the past six months, it's no wonder you're having a hard time keeping up. Here's our pick of SOHO-savvy ways to get your brain (and business) cruising in the technological fast lane. . . .

Figuring It Out

International University College, the Ivy League of the satellite set, offers an eight-week course called "Using the Internet in Business"-with an interesting twist: The college practices what it preaches. Courses are broadcast over satellite and cable TV (via Iones Intercable's ME/U channel) or delivered to your door on videocassette. Augment lessons by talking to your instructor, Robert Geier, on the Internet, and submit your homework online, (\$335 per course; 800-777-6463 or http://www.iuc.com/html).

... Staying on Top Once you get caught up with current events, staving there can be a full-time preoccupation. Magee Enterprises' Rosebud may be the first usable PC search agent. It's designed to scour CompuServe for topics, phrases, stock ticker symbols, sports teams, or whatever you want, plus it runs in the background on your Windows PC according to a schedule you set. Rosebud will even page you

if, say, a stock drops below a preset value (\$40 est, street price; 800-662-4330), A 14-day free trial version is available on CompuServe (GO PCVENA Library 6)....

Keeping Track Now that most applications are available on CD-ROM, you might find yourself swapping discs the way you used to in the floppy era. The CD-ROM jukebox-expensive and clunky-has been the only solution. But no more. Panasonic's Big 5 quad-speed CD-ROM changer (above) houses five discs at a time and is easier to use than any cartridge or caddie. Just slip a disc into the slot and the autochanger mechanism racks it up. (\$299 est, street price: 800-742-8086). . . .



Finding Business

Whether you're looking for clients or checking back into the corporate race. Individual Software's ResumeMaker Deluxe CD (\$40 est, street price: 800-822-3522) can help you get the details down. Create vour résumé, write cover letters, and use the contact and scheduling features to keep up-to-date. The Virtual Interview helps sharpen your one-on-one skills, KA, JOC, and WI

Reader Service Numbers: Using the Internet in Business, 773; Rosebud, 774; Big 5, 775; ResumeMaker, 776

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his time of year, a flat, personal income tax begins to sound pretty good. Who wouldn't be willing to give up a few deductions if it meant dispensing with the annual agony of filling out tax forms? Millions of people have turned to tax-preparation programs to deal with

this angst. But can tax software really make your life simpler and save you money? Is it worth using if you have only a few forms to fill out? And can you have confidence in it if you're one of those "lucky" individuals with a lot of taxable income?

We ran prerelease versions of Block Financial's

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PC 1040: TaxCut's helpful audit feature identifies each affected form so you can easily correct your errors.

Kiplinger TaxCut / Block Financial / (800) 457-9519 / \$30 list price / Reader Service No. 778

Kiplinger TaxCut, Intuit's TurboTax Deluxe, Parsons Technology's Personal Tax Edge, and 4Home Productions' Simply Tax, through PC Computing's Usability Labs. All of the tax-preparation packages are complete when it comes to tax forms, help, and extras, such as tax advice. But our testers found only Kiplinger

TaxCut and TurboTax Deluxe easy enough for novice tax preparers. And who isn't a novice with a program that's used only once a year?

But even TurboTax Deluxe left our testers feeling a little anxious about forgetting something-despite its extensive array of features for

> double-checking your math, auditing your return, suggesting deductions, and delivering taxplanning tips. The trouble is, even if you know where you've made an error in one of these packages, it isn't always clear how

to fix it; and even if you understand a tax question, that doesn't mean you can find the answer.

Still, 30 percent more taxpavers turn from pencil and paper to tax programs for help every year. We found that all four programs include pretty much the same set of features, although their execution varies. Tax programs have developed without a new twist for a couple of years-developers

have just paid more attention to improving existing features.

This year's programs offer easier access to more obscure

Internal Revenue Service forms than ever before. You'll eniov simpler navigation through plain-English interviews, better-written program help, and more expert tax advice. The latter is delivered with the CD-ROM versions of TaxCut and TurboTax Deluxe via dozens of multimedia videos and audio clips, complete IRS documentation, and online versions of financial bestsellers. In fact, there's more row toy

information. deduction tips, and tax-planning strategies available than the average American could possibly absorb before April 15.

Tax Translator We found

TaxCut's plain-English interview with its smooth and logical interface the



Tax Pointers: TurboTax Deluxe not only helps you find missed deductions, it also uses hypertext links to explain tax topics.

TurboTax Deluxe / Intuit / (800) 964-1040 / \$50 est street price / Reader Service No. 779

easiest way to fill in the blanks, TaxCut also provides the best help through the taxpreparation process with video clips that are especially informative, TurboTax Deluxe's interview is more visually pleasing and comprehensive, but its video clips are often a bit too general for novices.

Both Personal Tax Edge and Simply Tax have their pluses and minuses. Their user interviews are pretty



Saving Suggestions: When you've finished the forms, Personal Tax Edge delivers tax-saving tips for next year.

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Schoosability Test



Split-Level View: Simply Tax's split screen is good for identifying problems, but its audit screen isn't as thorough.

Simply Tax / 4Home Productions / (800) 773-5445 / \$20 list price / Reader Service No. 781

good, but each has idiosyncrasies that make it difficult to work through the tax forms or to make changes or add details once you've entered data. And Simply Tax was sometimes so slow that we wondered whether there was something wrong with our computer. Personal Tax Edge, on the other hand, is a zippy, 32-bit, Windows 95 application.

All four tax programs vield an extensive set of printed documents that you can use to file your taxes. Their output is complete, IRS-approved, and ready for filing. You also get your own personal summary with your filing status, gross and taxable incomes, plus background notes. TurboTax Deluxe and Simply Tax offer a few more forms than TaxCut and Personal Tax Edge, but who's counting? There are more than 120 IRS forms to worry about, and many you'd never dream of asking for, if one of these programs didn't prompt you.

The programs also offer tax forms for 24 states for around \$20 on top of the basic package price. These forms pretty much cover states coast to coast—from Maine to California—and

are easy to fill out once you've completed your federal tax return.

The Business Edge The CD-ROM versions of TaxCut and TurboTax Deluye offer

Deluxe offer extensive videos on operations as well as tax advice. With more than 100

clips, TurboTax Deluxe has about twice as many as TaxCut, but our testers found TaxCut's videos more helpful. The exception is the extra help found in the \$80 Turbo Tax for Business. This new version translates convoluted IRS lings for issues of most interest to small businesses. In addition, there are business-oriented tax tips, business-specific audit flags, and a multitude of small-business-oriented IRS publications and expert books online.

TurboTax Deluxe also has an advantage when it comes to transferring data from Intuit's market-leading personal-finance application, Quicken. You can get a real jump on taxes by keeping the tax implications of your financial transactions current during the year and using Quicken's tax-planning module.

Help, I Need

Some Money Can a tax program save you money? Possibly, In TaxCut. Block Financial Software points out that the average federal refund is \$1,000. TurboTax Deluxe is strongest by far at helping you find deductions to whittle down your annual loan to the U.S. Department of the Treasury, TaxCut is weakest, and Personal Tax Edge and Simply Tax fall somewhere in between, All show how you can possibly reduce your tax liability in the future, as well as point to current deductions you might otherwise have

SIDE RV SIDE

COMPARING THE TOP TAX PACKAGES



Pretty Picture: TurboTax's interview process is more eye-catching, but testers prefer TaxCut's interview and help videos.



More Info: TurboTax identified missed deductions, errors, and audit warnings more completely than TaxCut.



Down to Business: Testers found the interview process in TaxCut easier to follow and more helpful than TurboTax's.



Let's Review: TaxCut provides personal-tax summaries, but testers felt TurboTax gave more financial advice.

SoluUsability Test



Tax Package **Feature** Audit

	Kiplinger TaxCut	TurboTax Deluxe	Personal Tax Edge	Simply Tax
Tax Interview	Easy and logical	Comprehensive	Sufficient	Sufficient
Answer Checking	Complete	Complete	Sufficient	Sufficient
Expert Tax Help	Most helpful	Very helpful	Helpful	Needs more
Verdict	****	***	***	***

*****Excellent **** Good ***Acceptable **Poor *Unacceptable

missed. They also highlight items on your return that might trigger an audit.

Of course, you have to use these programs correctly, but 83 percent of third-year TurboTax Deluxe users report that the program is quicker and easier than trying to interpret tax forms. You can't go wrong with TurboTax Deluxe or Personal Tax Edge, whose publishers will pay IRS penalties if their programs make a calculation error. Turbo Tay Deluye even includes an online book

called "How to Pay Zero Taxes," which includes tips for "exclusions, credits. deductions, shelters, smart investments, and more," The mere existence of these terms shows how complicated tax law has become. Overall, we found all four

programs fully capable—even if you need a lot of forms. If indeed you do, you're still in for many hours of data gathering and brain twisting. As a rule of thumb, the fewer forms you file and the simpler your tax situation, the more you'll like these programs.

If your taxes are complicated, you can use these products to help organize your paperwork for an accountant.

With their online advice, easy navigation, and tax tips, our usability testing found that Kiplinger TaxCut and TurboTax Deluxe are the best picks for surviving these taxing times. MH

Contributors to Soho: IAMES OLIVER CURY, MIKE HOGAN, and WOODY LEONHARD. Edited by KIM AUSTIN.

ahnotes If you're lucky, you'll

use a tax-preparation program only once a year, which makes the usability of these packages of paramount importance. PC Computing's Usability Labs' staff tested the head-start editions of four leading Windows tax-preparation packages by completing fictitious returns for a twoincome family of five. and for a divorced man with one child

We took 20 minutes to familiarize ourselves with each program and an hour to complete the plain-English interviews and/or forms data entry. At the end. we completed each program's final tax review and printed and compared the tax forms. We judged each program based on the ease of data entry. availability and clarity of program help, and the usefulness of discoverable features like tax-saving videos.

Although they successfully completed both tax returns with all the programs, our usability testers still felt uneasy about filing their own income taxes online. But it's hard to say whether this fear is related to the tax programs themselves or to the free-floating anxiety we all feel when facing off with the IRS each year.

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WebScan / McAfee Associates / (408) 988-3832 / \$39 est. street price / Reader Service No. 791

Survey Said

Need an effective online polling method? Decisive Technology's unique Internet-survey software, Decisive Survey, lets you set up a custom-made e-mail survey in minutes.

Decisive Survey / Decisive Technology / (800) 987-9995 / http://www.decisive.com / starting at \$495 est. street price / Reader Service No. 792

Oracle WebSystem

Oracle's new WebSystem combines the power of the Oracle 7 database technology with Webbased servers, browsers, and development tools.

Oracle WebSystem / Oracle Corp. / (415) 506-7000 / http://www.oracle.com / from \$4,995 est. street price / Resder Service No. 703 LANGUAGE TRANSLATION

Parlez-Vous Internet?

There are times when the World Wide Web seems a wfully provincial. The United States is bome to more than 4.3 million Intermet hosts, making English the Web's lingua franca. But things are changing, Internet hosts in non-English-speaking countries gree by 108 percent last year, and the future of a truly global community now hinges on language translation.

Early this year, a number of companies announced Internet language solutions for on-the-fly foreign-tonative translation. If they succeed, you'll no longer be locked out of a Japanese page because you speak only English. The first of these technologies, code-named Barcelona. was developed by Globalink. Barcelona is an \$895 translation engine that works with most online services, allowing realtime translation of French. German, Italian, Spanish, and English, with other languages



Speaking in Tongues: Before the Internet can live up to its global potential, language barriers must be broken.

in development. And don't be surprised to see Barcelona incorporated into Netscape's Navigator 2.0; the companies are said to be working together to make Navigator the global I-Way platform.

Other companies, such as Bitstream and Accent Software, are working on similar language ventures. Bitstream's Cyberbit Worldwide Typeface is an international, multilingual solution—a sort of Esperanto

Shop Till You Drop: Essential Online Malls

of the font world. Accent Software's product, Internet with an Accent, acts as a multilingual plug-in for Navigator 2.0 and supports more than 30 languages.

Get more information and download demonstration soft-ware from Globalink, Bitstream, and Accent Software from PC Computing Online (see instructions on page 36). Soon, it won't matter what language you speak.

ONE-MINUTE GUIDE

Too tired to drive to the mall? Fire up your modem and shop from your desktop!

2MARKET Check out this unique CD-ROM—based online-shopping experience with goods from Eddie Bauer, Starbucks Coffee, and more (America Online keyword: 2market).

ESHOP PLAZA eShop Plaza brings you unrivaled offers and discounts from Tower Records, 1-800-Flowers, Good Guys, and

Spiegel. Download free eShop software

(http://www.eshop.com/).

1-800 MUSIC NOW MCI

Communications wants you to shop for music via its toll-free number or Web site (http://www.1800musicnow.mci.com).

CYBERSHOP Billed as the ultimate shopping experience, CyberShop is giving away a \$25,000 shopping spree. It boasts 10,000 brand-name products across

dozens of consumer categories, and has a handy search engine that asks you what you're shopping for. Check it out, and bring your credit card (http://www .nfic.com/Cybershop/Online/).

INTERNET SHOPPING NETWORK ISN is one of the pioneers of online shopping, offering tens of thousands of bargains on everything from clothing and flowers to computer software and electronics (http://www.internet.net).

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File: ECD.ZIP Size/Time*: 207K/5 minutes IPEG of My Heart

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Un, Un, and Away Greatest Paper Airplanes uses animation to teach you how to fold really cool planes.

File: GPA ZIP Size/Time*: 701K/17 minutes Master Icon Editor **** Microangelo lets you browse, edit, and manage Windows icons with ease.

File: MUANGL.ZIP Size/Time*: 360K/9 minutes Fxit Windows Intuitively

Hate clicking on Start to close Windows? Use TravExit to shut down with an icon instead. File: TRAYEX 7IP Size/Time*: 9K/15 seconds

Ungrade Notepad **** ORead is a powerful text editor with multiple document windows, search tools, and bookmarks, File: ORED95.ZIP Size/Time*: 331K/8 minutes

Keep an Eve on Windows 95 Programs **** ZD Net's free Task Monitor lets you see all your running programs, and cascade, tile, or close them.

File: ZDTSK95.ZIP Size/Time*: 188K/4 minutes **Custom Windows Shortcuts** Use SmilerShell to create function-key shortcuts in Windows 95 or Windows NT.

File: SMSH95.ZIP Size/Time*: 172K/4 minutes Don't Lose Your Marbles *** In Marble, a game of logic and experimentation, you overcome hidden obstacles to get through a maze.

File: MARBLE.ZIP Size/Time*: 57K/1 minute Tiny CD Player ---

Simply but effectively, CD Satellite plays audio-CD tracks in the order you specify. File: CDSAT.ZIP Size/Time*: 8K/15 seconds

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WATCH THAT CURSOR

Tired of watching the same old hourglass, day in and day out? Replace it with a nifty animated cursor. EP Cursors contains ten original, animated cursors that you can use with Windows 95 File: EPCLIRS ZIP Size/Time*: 24K/30 seconds

ICONS, ICONS, ICONS Is your desktop starting to look bland and uninteresting? Spice it up with some new and exciting icons, This collection is loaded with more than 3,000 of them. File: 3000ICON ZIP Size/Time*: 575K/14 minutes

BEAVIS AND BUTT-HEAD Hev. Beavis! The WAV files in this collection don't suck. Hehehe, Yeah. Watch me make this one my Windows start-up sound. Yeah, Butt-head. Hehehehe, That mas really cool. File: BEAVIS 7IP Size/Time*: 339K/9 minutes

Ratings: **** Climbing a stairway to heaven. *** Won't you fly me to the moon? *** I was born in the U.S.A. ** On the highway to hell. * Oh no, I'm stuck in Lodi again,

Insites

GAMES GALORE Pacific HiTech's Web site is a cornuconia of games and other goodies you can download.



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ome people are born with the ability for total recall, instantly retrieving obscure facts about any topic. They're the people everyone avoids at parties. Still, having a bunch of facts available is handy at times: the perfect quote or just the right cogent fact to cinch the deal-or a way to check if you used the word cogent correctly. Here are some CDs to help.



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Our Times: Multimedia Encyclopedia of the 20th Century / Vicarious / (800) 465-6543, (415) 610-8300 / \$70 est. street price / Reader Service No. 799



COMPTON'S REFERENCE COLLECTION OCCOO Here's another perfect excuse to

buy a CD-ROM drive. Like Microsoft's killer CD, Bookshelf, Compton's Reference Collection is an all-in-one bundle of essential reference works including The Elements of Style, which by itself is enough for this CD to find a place in my ready-to-run stack. It also offers guides on business writing, forms, and quotations-plus a dictionary, a thesaurus, and an atlas. Whew! The collection is on par with Bookshelf, but harder to use: Compton's doesn't include an always-on-top toolbar you can use from other applications, and the search engine is confusing. However, I like right-mouse-button clicking to copy text directly to a word processor. Compton's leans more toward business use than Bookshelf does, but Bookshelf remains my first source for all



Encyclopedia Exotica: Compton's boasts a time line and the classics.



those troubling facts and rules of grammar I keep forgetting, Nonetheless, I'm keeping this collection in the wings.

Compton's Reference Collection / Compton's NewMedia / (800) 261-6109, (619) 929-2500 / S59 est, street price / Reader Service No. 800



MORROW CARTOPEDIA OOO The maps and charts on this

atlas CD are handsome, so it's disappointing that there are not enough of them. The reason there are so few may be the scale of the maps, which zoom in to where one inch equals about 150 miles in the United States, but still look small on a high-resolution screen. Lots of little bits of interesting text and graphs pop up with the click of an icon, but multimedia is scant. The U.S. map has only three highlights: videos of Hawaiian volcanoes and of Old Faithful, and a photo of New York City. It lacks the detail that sends map freaks-and there are such people-into ecstasy.

Cartopedia: The Ultimate World Reference Atlas / DK Multimedia / (800) 225-3362, (212) 213-4800 / S50 est. street price / Reader Service No. 801

INFOPEDIA OOOO

Infopedia is the poor cousin of all-purpose reference CDs. The titles it contains are decent enough-Webster's Dictionary, Hammond Atlas, World Almanac, Roget's Thesaurus, Merriam Webster's English Usage, Merriam Webster's Biographical Dictionary, Merriam Webster's Dictionary of Quotations. And it's the only one-stop collection with a complete encyclopedia, Funk & Wagnalls. But none of its references are the kind of musthaves that most people don't own, like The Elements of Style, nor do the works have the business focus found in Compton's Reference Collection. And Infopedia doesn't have the polish and easy accessibility of

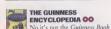
CD-RONWhite



Sum of Its Parts: Infopedia features animations and decent search tools.

Microsoft's Bookshelf. Instead, it has a big selection of animation, videos, and sound clips covering topies from the cry of the American elk to the national anthem of Zimbabwe. It also includes an excellent tutorial and some handy tools, including one that lets you collect and save the final hits from a search for a single project.

Infopedia: The Ultimate Multimedia Reference Tool / Future Vision Multimedia; Softkey Int'l / (800) 227-5609, (617) 494-1200 / 560 est. street price / Reader Service No. 802



of World Records, but something more like the USA Today of encyclopedias. Every screen is a colorful concoction of art and text with virtually no depth. Organized by categories rather than alphabetically, Guinness's two-disc set offers only two ways to search for a topic: travel down the category menus or scroll through long lists. This is fine for lazy strolls through the universe, the human body, literature, or philosophy. And it perfectly matches Father Guido Sarducci's idea of the 20-minute university-you learn only the things about a subject you'd remember after you've been out of college for five years.

The Guinness Encyclopedia / Wayzata Technology / (800) 377-7321, (218) 326-0597 / \$30 est. street price / Reader Service No. 803



THE OXFORD ENGLISH DICTIONARY OOO The Oxford English Dictionary

is too much of a good thing. This is the authoritative dictionary in the scholarly world, and it can tell you more about

each word in the English language than you imagined there was to tell. But it's overkill for someone who just warns to look up the meaning of obernozem. This dictionary does omit some words, particularly those associated with computing, such as GEO (garbage in, garbage out) and personal computer. And this CD is devoid of rudimentary multimedia touches such as word pronunciations. But these are minor flaws compared with one serious mistake: its price. At \$895, this is priced as if it were selling on paper. Its creators should have looked up one



An Oxford Education: You'll need one to digest all of the etymologies.

term in the dictionary: mass merchandising. Good as this CD is, it's difficult to justify its cost compared with an excellent CD dictionary like the Random House Unabridged Electronic Dictionary (see CD-RON, March 1995, page 320).

The Oxford English Dictionary, Second Edition / Oxford University Press / (800) 445-9714 / \$895 direct sale only / Reader Service No. 804



BRITANNICA CD 2.0

Britannica is the New York
Times of encyclopedias—authoritative,
extensive, gray, and dull. This new version tries to dress up for computing's
never-ending multimedia party, but you
can tell it doesn't feel very comfortable in
is new ouffit. The illustrations are unartractive and, there are no animations,
videos, or sound clips on the disc. It does
have an interesting Netscape-style interface, although no online hooks are in
place yet. Another gripe: You have to
connect a copy-protection plug to your
parallel port before Britannica will run.
Oh, and the price! I still give it a



It's Not a Browser: Britannica lacks multimedia, but adds a Web interface.

three-CD rating because the content is so good. But almost 1,000 bucks? Come on. Nothing's that good.

Britannica CD 2.0 / Encyclopedia Britannica / (800) 323-1229, (312) 347-7000 / \$995 list price / Reader Service No. 805



SCIENCE FICTION

Does a part of you exist in a world where little green men are real? Where people travel to the stars, sailing through time, and aliens aren't from neighboring countries? Yes? Then you must have Science Fiction: The Multimedia Encyclopedia of Science Fiction. Forgive the redundant title. This is one of the best combinations of content and presentation I've seen on CD. It lets you explore science fiction by concepttime travel, life forms, technology-and by author or movie. Based on a Hugo Award-winning book, the text (with over a million words) explores important sci-fi concepts, including videos of some of the genre's best-known writers.

Science Fiction: The Multimedia Encyclopedia of Science Fiction / Groller Electronic Publishing / (800) 285-4534, (203) 797-3530 / \$49 est. street price / Reader Service No. 806



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The Bad

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Dirty, Hairy

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http://www-egi nni For a Few Dollars More

Fastwood: The CD

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Play Misty for Me

http://www.geopage com/WestHollywood 1074/

Tools of the Trade

The Gun Page http://www.prairienet

"I know what you're thinking.... Did he fire six shots or only five? But being this is a 44 magnum. and will blow your head clean off, you've got to ask yourself a question: Do I feel lucky?"

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